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University of Alberta

On Eating Chinese: Chinese Restaurants and the Politics of Diaspora

by

Lily Cho ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall 2003

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Aug. 26, 2003

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **On Eating Chinese: Chinese Restaurants and the Politics of Diaspora** submitted by **Lily Cho** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**.

Stephen Slemon

Heather Zwicker

Karyn Ball

Julie Rak

Richard Young

Donald Goellnicht

Supervisor writes the date that the thesis is approved by committee here Aug. 12. 2003.

To

Leung Yin Kwan (Gwen Cho) and

Cho Ka Dick (Richard Cho)

Abstract

Small town Chinese restaurants in Canada are at once everywhere (there is almost no small town without a Chinese restaurant) and nowhere in contemporary discussions of Chinese immigration, diasporas, Canadian multiculturalism, transnational migration patterns, and global movements of people and capital. This paradox of visibility points to a bias in discussions of diaspora and transnationalism where diasporic subjects are almost without exception presumed to arrive in the metropolitan spaces of the first world. This dissertation emerges out of a concern with the way in which diaspora studies seems to have no place for small town Chinese restaurants and the people who worked in them except as unfortunate features of a forgettable past. This dissertation investigates the cultural significance of small town Chinese restaurants in Canada and argues that their cultural legacy embeds a history of Chinese Canadian labour migration and resistance to assimilation.

Chapter One distinguishes diasporic agency from postcolonial conceptions of agency through an exploration of the productivity of rumour and the history of Chinese cooks serving food to non-Chinese consumers. Chapter Two attends to this problem of diasporic agency further through a reading of Chinese restaurant menus and argues that the menus reveal a disjunctive temporality which interrupts Euro-Canadian narratives of progress. Chapter Three takes up the folk music of Joni Mitchell and Sylvia Tyson and argues that the function of the Chinese restaurant in these songs reveals the nostalgia which is structural to conceptions of the public sphere. Chapter Four explores the incipient situatedness of diasporas and ways of reading their emplacement in places of

"arrival" through the artistic collaborations of Andrew Hunter and Gu Xiong, and Fred Wah and Haruko Okano. Chapter Five attends to the problem of transmission, of attempting to grasp what it is that makes diasporic communities diasporic and, through a reading of the poetry of Fred Wah, argues for an understanding of diasporic community based in a dehistoricized history.

Not only did Chinese immigration to Canada profoundly change the restaurant industry, but it has also shaped our contemporary understandings of Chineseness in Canada.

Acknowledgements

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To Camilla Ingr, Todd Ferguson, Marni Mishna, Pete Liem, and the other members of the Mile End Poker Society. To Martin Beatch, Katharine Charlton, Aaron Hankewich, Emily Hill, Richard McCabe, Susan Spronk and Keri Zwicker. To David Lloyd.

To my family.

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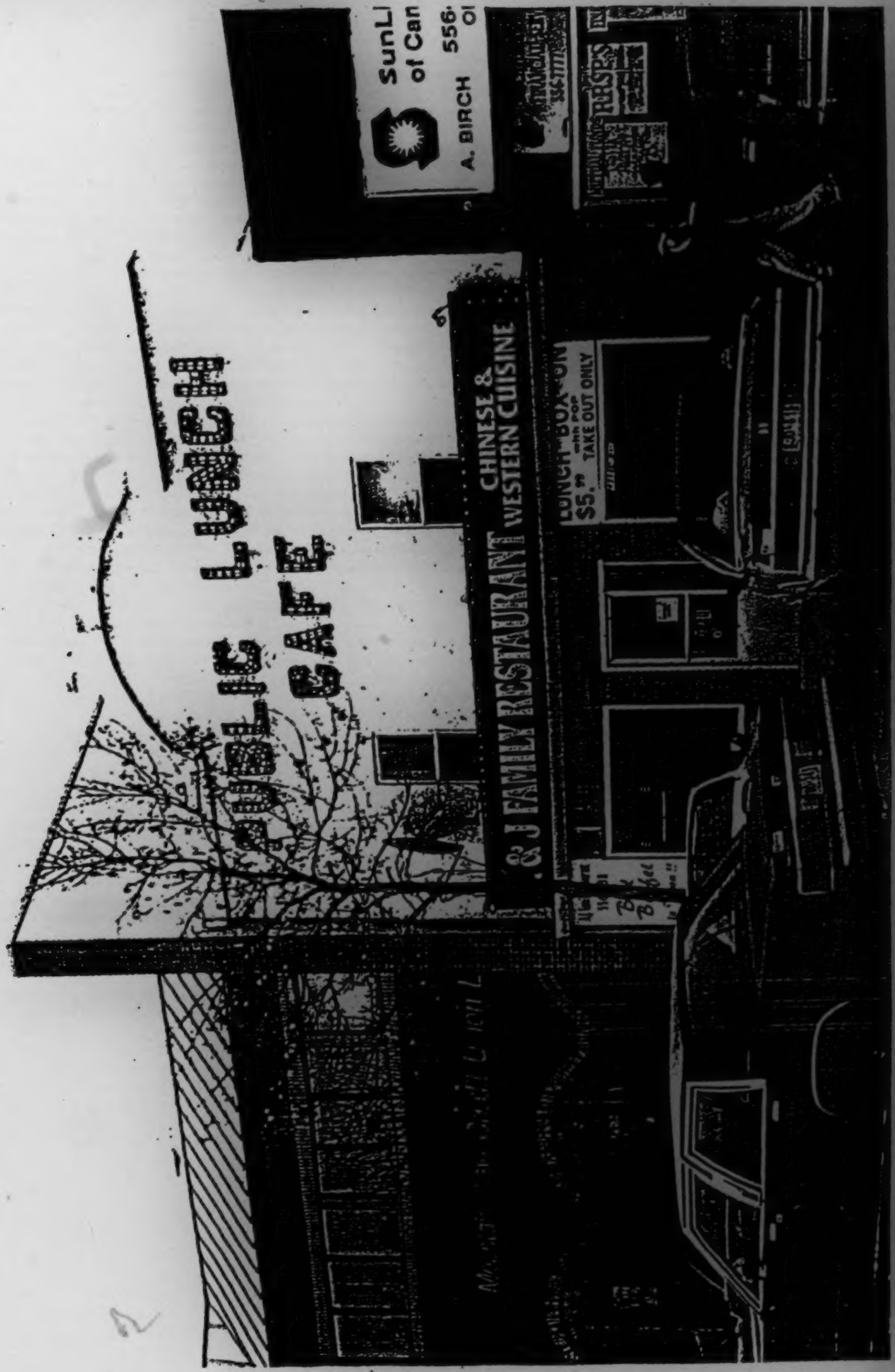

PUBLIC LUNCH
CAFE
A & J FAMILY RESTAURANT
CHINESE & WESTERN CUISINE
LUNCH BOX ON
$5.99 with pop
TAKE OUT ONLY
SunLife of Canada
A. BIRCH
556-

Fig. 1. A & J Family Restaurant, Olds, Alberta. 1999.

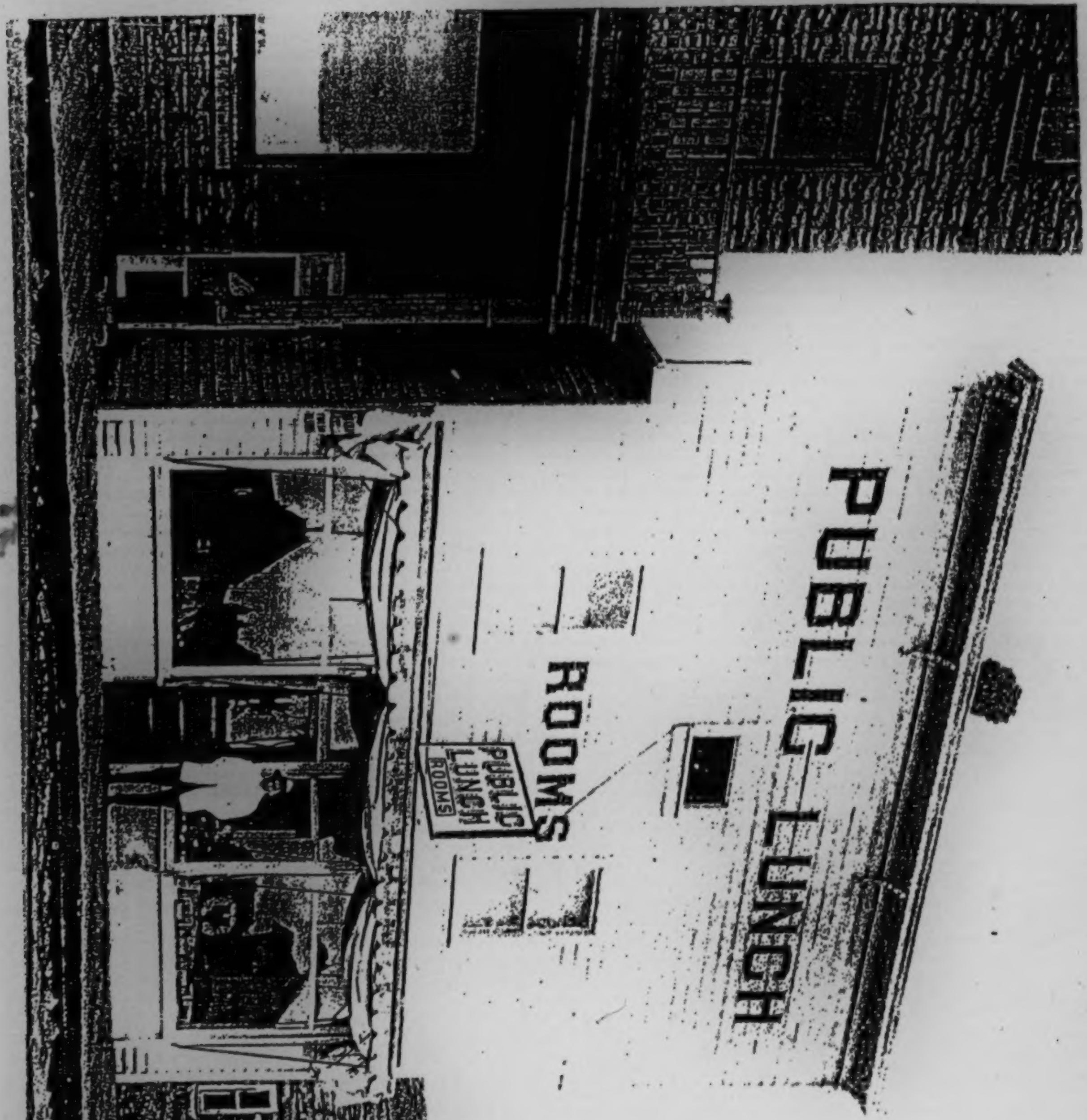
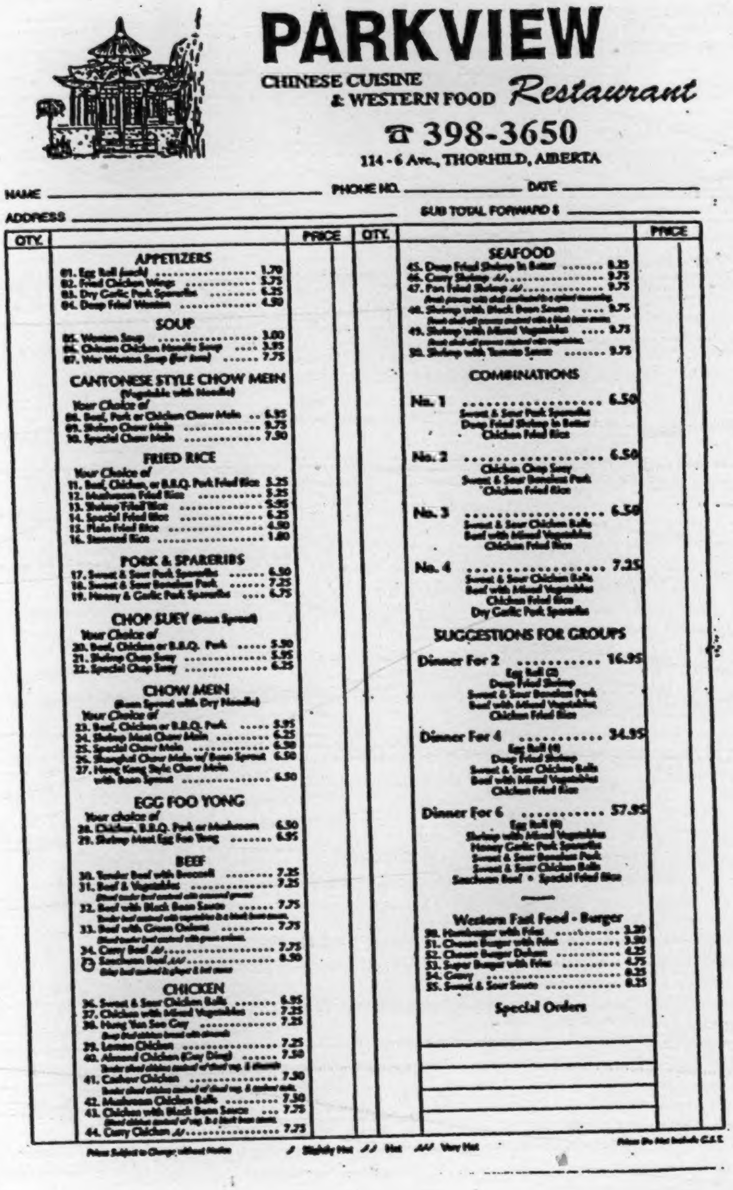

PUBLIC LUNCH
ROOMS
PUBLIC LUNCH ROOMS

Fig. 2. Public Lunch Counter, Olds, Alberta, 1914 or 1915. Glenbow Archives



PARKVIEW

CHINESE CUISINE
& WESTERN FOOD *Restaurant*

☎ 398-3650

114 - 6 Ave., THORHILD, ALBERTA

NAME ________ PHONE NO. ________ DATE ________

ADDRESS ________ SUB TOTAL FORWARD $ ________

APPETIZERS

QTY.		PRICE
	01. Egg Roll (each)	1.70
	02. Fried Chicken Wings	5.75
	03. Dry Garlic Pork Spareribs	6.25
	04. Deep Fried Wonton	4.50

SOUP

05. Wonton Soup	3.00
06. Chinese Chicken Noodle Soup	3.95
07. War Wonton Soup (for two)	7.75

CANTONESE STYLE CHOW MEIN
(Vegetable with Noodles)
Your Choice of

08. Beef, Pork or Chicken Chow Mein	6.95
09. Shrimp Chow Mein	9.75
10. Special Chow Mein	7.50

FRIED RICE
Your Choice of

11. Beef, Chicken, or B.B.Q. Pork Fried Rice	5.25
12. Mushroom Fried Rice	5.25
13. Shrimp Fried Rice	5.95
14. Special Fried Rice	6.25
15. Plain Fried Rice	4.50
16. Steamed Rice	1.80

PORK & SPARERIBS

17. Sweet & Sour Pork Spareribs	6.50
18. Sweet & Sour Boneless Pork	7.25
19. Honey & Garlic Pork Spareribs	6.75

CHOP SUEY (Bean Sprout)
Your Choice of

20. Beef, Chicken or B.B.Q. Pork	5.50
21. Shrimp Chop Suey	5.95
22. Special Chop Suey	6.25

CHOW MEIN
(Bean Sprout with Dry Noodles)
Your Choice of

23. Beef, Chicken or B.B.Q. Pork	5.95
24. Shrimp Meat Chow Mein	6.25
25. Special Chow Mein	6.50
26. Shanghai Chow Mein w/ Bean Sprout	6.50
27. Hong Kong Style Chow Mein with Bean Sprout	6.50

EGG FOO YONG
Your choice of

28. Chicken, B.B.Q. Pork or Mushroom	6.50
29. Shrimp Meat Egg Foo Yong	6.95

BEEF

30. Tender Beef with Broccoli	7.25
31. Beef & Vegetables [illegible]	7.25
32. Beef with Black Bean Sauce [illegible]	7.75
33. Beef with Green Onions [illegible]	7.75
34. Curry Beef //	7.75
㉟ Szechuan Beef /// [illegible]	8.50

CHICKEN

36. Sweet & Sour Chicken Balls	6.95
37. Chicken with Mixed Vegetables	7.25
38. Hong Yan Soo Gay [illegible]	7.25
39. Lemon Chicken	7.25
40. Almond Chicken (Gay Ding) [illegible]	7.50
41. Cashew Chicken [illegible]	7.50
42. Mushroom Chicken Balls	7.50
43. Chicken with Black Bean Sauce [illegible]	7.75
44. Curry Chicken //	7.75

SEAFOOD

QTY.		PRICE
	45. Deep Fried Shrimp in Batter	8.25
	46. Curry Shrimp //	9.75
	47. Pan Fried Shrimp // [illegible]	9.75
	48. Shrimp with Black Bean Sauce [illegible]	9.75
	49. Shrimp with Mixed Vegetables [illegible]	9.75
	50. Shrimp with Tomato Sauce	9.75

COMBINATIONS

No. 1 Sweet & Sour Pork Spareribs Deep Fried Shrimp in Batter Chicken Fried Rice	6.50
No. 2 Chicken Chop Suey Sweet & Sour Boneless Pork Chicken Fried Rice	6.50
No. 3 Sweet & Sour Chicken Balls Beef with Mixed Vegetables Chicken Fried Rice	6.50
No. 4 Sweet & Sour Chicken Balls Beef with Mixed Vegetables Chicken Fried Rice Dry Garlic Pork Spareribs	7.25

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUPS

Dinner For 2 Egg Roll (2) Deep Fried Shrimp Sweet & Sour Boneless Pork Beef with Mixed Vegetables Chicken Fried Rice	16.95
Dinner For 4 Egg Roll (4) Deep Fried Shrimp Sweet & Sour Chicken Balls Beef with Mixed Vegetables Chicken Fried Rice	34.95
Dinner For 6 Egg Roll (6) Shrimp with Mixed Vegetables Honey Garlic Pork Spareribs Sweet & Sour Boneless Pork Sweet & Sour Chicken Balls Szechuan Beef • Special Fried Rice	57.95

Western Fast Food - Burger

50. Hamburger with Fries	3.25
51. Cheese Burger with Fries	3.50
52. Cheese Burger Deluxe	4.25
53. Super Burger with Fries	4.75
54. Gravy	0.25
55. Sweet & Sour Sauce	0.25

Special Orders

Prices Subject to Change without Notice / Slightly Hot // Hot /// Very Hot Prices Do Not Include G.S.T.

Fig. 3. Contemporary menus. 1999.

WESTERN FAVORITES

(Below Items Come with French Fries)

Cheese Burger	4.50
Bacon Cheese Burger	5.50
Chicken Burger	4.50
Fish Burger	5.50
Club House Sandwich	5.50
Chicken Nuggets	4.95
Fried Chicken	6.95
Fish and Chips	5.50
Steak Sandwich N.Y. Strip with Garlic Toast	8.50
Hamburger Steak	5.95
Beef Liver & Onion	5.95
Hot Hamburger Sandwich	5.95
Hot Turkey Sandwich	5.95
Hot Beef Sandwich	5.95

◆ ◆ ◆

Spaghetti with Meat Sauce & Garlic Toast	4.95

Chinese & Western Smorg

Includes Salad Bar and Dessert

Hours

Everyday 11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Every Night 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Special Price For Kids
Discount For Seniors

Suggestions For Chinese Dinner

(A) Dinner For 1
Pineapple Chicken Balls
OR, Sweet & Sour Shrimps
With Chicken Fried Rice
6.00

(B) Dinner For 1
Sweet & Sour Ribs OR,
Breaded Dry Ribs with
Chicken Fried Rice
6.00

(C) Dinner For 1
Egg Roll
Sweet & Sour Ribs
Chicken Chow Mein
Chicken Fried Rice 7.50

(D) Dinner For 1
Egg Roll
Sweet & Sour
Chicken Ball
Fried Beef With Broccoli
Chicken Fried Rice 7.50

(E) Dinner For 1
Sweet & Sour Shrimp
Fried Beef with Chinese
Greens
Chicken Fried Rice
7.50

(F) Dinner For 1
Ginger Beef
Sweet & Sour
Chicken Balls
Fried Beef with
Chinese Greens
Chicken Fried Rice 9.50

(G) Dinner For 2
Egg Rolls (2)
Chicken Mushroom
Chow Mein
Sweet & Sour Ribs
Pineapple Chicken Balls
Chicken Fried Rice
18.00

(H) Dinner for 3
Egg Rolls (3)
Deep Fried Shrimp
In Batter
Sweet & Sour Ribs
Fried Beef with
Chinese Greens
Chicken Fried Rice 28.00

(I) Dinner For 4
Egg Rolls (4)
Deep Fried Shrimp
In Batter
Fried Beef with
Chinese Greens
Chicken Fried Rice
Pineapple Chicken Balls
OR, Sweet & Sour
Boneless Pork 38.00

(J) Dinner For 5
Egg Rolls (5)
Deep Fried Shrimp
In Batter
Pineapple Chicken
Balls
Club Special Chop Suey
Ginger Beef
Club Special Fried Rice
46.00

(Additional Person For G to J - $9.00)

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Club Cafe

MAIN STREET, INNISFAIL
FULLY LICENSED
SPECIALIZING IN CHINESE FOOD

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

TAKE-OUT MENU

PLEASE PHONE

227☎3179

FREE DELIVERY SERVICE WITH MINIMUM FOOD ORDER OF $ 15.00 WITHIN TOWN LIMITS.

PICK-UP ORDER OVER $ 15.00
10% OFF WHEN PAID BY CASH.
5% OFF ON CREDIT CARD.

Prices Subject To Change Without Notice

Appetizers

Spring Rolls (each)	1.50
Crisp Egg Roll (each)	1.50
Deep Fried Wonton	5.50
Grilled Pork Dumplings (10)	5.95
Deep Fried Chicken Wings	5.95
Hot Spice Chicken Wings	5.95
Honey Garlic Chicken Wings	6.50

Soup & Noodles

1. Hot and Sour Soup	4.95
2. Chicken Noodle	3.95
3. Beef or Pork Noodle	3.95
4. Wonton Soup	3.95
5. Wor Wonton Chinese Style (for 2 to 3 person servings)	8.95

Chow Mein

6. Chicken Chow Mein	6.25
7. Chicken Mushroom Chow Mein	6.50
8. Mushroom Chow Mein	6.25
9. Shrimp Chow Mein	6.95
10. Beef Chow Mein	6.25
11 Pork Chow Mein	6.25
12. Chow Mein Cantonese Style (shrimp, chicken, beef and pork)	8.95
13. Shanghai Fried Noodle	6.95

Chop Suey

14. Chicken Chop Suey	5.95
15. Chicken Mushroom Chop Suey	6.25
16. Mushroom Chop Suey	5.95
17. Shrimp Chop Suey	6.95
18. Beef Chop Suey	5.95
19. Pork Chop Suey	5.95
20. Club Special Chop Suey (shrimp, chicken, beef and pork)	8.95
21. Stir Fried Mixed Vegetable	6.50

Rice

22. Vegetable Fried Rice	4.95
23. Chicken Fried Rice	5.65
24. Shrimp Fried Rice	6.50
25. Beef Fried Rice	5.65
26. Pork Fried Rice	5.65
27. Mushroom Fried Rice	5.65
28. Curried Beef Fried Rice	5.65
29. Club Special Fried Rice	6.95
30. Steamed Rice	1.25

Dainty Eggs

31. Vegetable Egg Foo-Yong	5.95
32. Chicken Egg Foo-Yong	6.50
33. Shrimp Egg Foo-Yong	6.85
34. Mushroom Egg Foo-Yong	6.50
35. Beef Egg Foo-Yong	6.50
36. Pork Egg Foo-Yong	6.50

Seafoods

37. Deep Fried Shrimp in Batter	8.25
38. Deep Fried Shrimp with Fresh Tomatoes	8.25
39. Sweet and Sour Shrimps	8.25
40. Pineapple Shrimps	8.50
41. Chow Har Lock with Vegetables	9.95
42. Curried Shrimp with Vegetables	9.95
43. Palace Shrimp (Hot Dish)	9.95
44. Dried Salt & Pepper Shrimp (Shell)	13.95
45. Dried Salt & Pepper Squid	8.95

Chicken

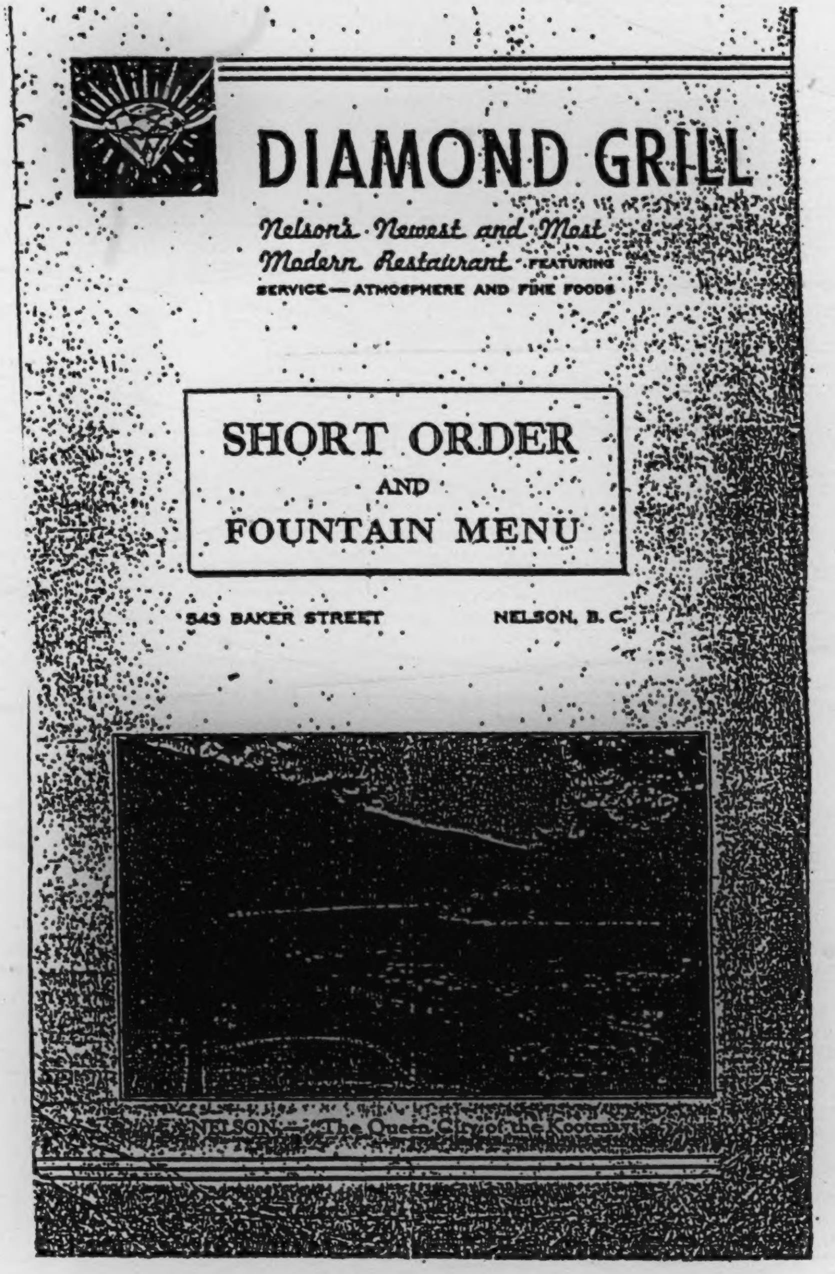
46. Sweet & Sour Chicken Balls	6.95
47. Pineapple Chicken Balls	7.25
48. Chicken Balls with Fresh Tomatoes	7.25
49. Mushrooms & Vegetables Chicken Balls	7.25
50. Palace Chicken (Hot Dish)	9.95
51. Curried Chicken With Vegetables	7.95
52. Diced Almond Chicken (Guy Ding)	7.85
53. Breaded Almond Chicken Soo Guy (with bean sprouts)	7.85
54. Chicken with Black Bean Sauce	7.85
55. Moo Goo Guy Pan (Chicken)	7.85
56. Breaded Chicken with Lemon Sauce	7.85
57. Dried Salt & Pepper Chicken	8.95

Beef

58. Fried Beef with Broccoli	6.95
59. Fried Beef with Green Peppers	7.25
60. Fried Beef with Chinese Greens	7.25
61. Fried Beef with Tomatoes	7.95
62. Curried Beef with Vegetables	7.95
63. Ginger Beef (Hot Dish)	8.25

Spareribs

64. Sweet & Sour Ribs	6.95
65. Pineapple Ribs	7.25
66. Breaded Garlic Dry Ribs	7.25
67. Honey Garlic Ribs	7.25
68. Spareribs with Black Bean Sauce	7.95
69. Sweet and Sour Boneless Pork	7.50



DIAMOND GRILL

Nelson's Newest and Most Modern Restaurant FEATURING SERVICE — ATMOSPHERE AND FINE FOODS

SHORT ORDER
AND
FOUNTAIN MENU

543 BAKER STREET NELSON, B. C.

NELSON — The Queen City of the Kootenays

Fig. 4. Diamond Grill Menu, Nelson, British Columbia. 1950s.

COLD MEATS

Cold Prime Rib of Beef	.90
Cold Sliced Chicken	.90
Cold Sliced Turkey	1.00
Cold Sirloin of Beef	.75
Cold Pork, Veal, Ham or Tongue	.75
Combination Cold Meats	.85

Potato Salad Served with Cold Dishes

PASTRY AND DESSERTS

Choice of Pie, per cut Apple, Raisin, Cream	.10
Shortcake, any flavor	.30
Boston Cream Pie	.25
Cup Cakes	.10 each
Butter Roll	.10
Cream Puff	.20
Pie al la Mode	.20
Pie with Whipped Cream	.15
Doughnuts, Long Johns	.10 each
Fruit Cake	.15
Fancy Cookies	.10
Shortbread	.10
Jell-O and Whipped Cream	.20

BEVERAGES

Tea, per pot	.10
Coffee	.10
Milk, per bottle	.10
Postum, Ovaltine, Bovril Cocoa, per cup	.10
Hot Chocolate	.10
Chinese Tea	.10

DIAMOND GRILL SPECIAL CHINESE DISHES

Chicken Chop Suey and Rice	.95
Mushroom Chop Suey and Rice	.95
Chicken Chow Mein	.95
Chicken Fried Rice	.95
Chinese Style Fried Mushrooms	.95
Chicken Noodle, Chinese Style	.85
Egg Fooyong	.95
Sweet and Sour Pork Spare Ribs and Rice	[illegible]

FOUNTAIN MENU

MISCELLANEOUS DRINKS

[illegible]	
Milk Shake, any flavor	.20
Malted Milk, any flavor	.25
Egg Malted, any flavor	.35
Ice Cream Sodas, any flavor	.20
Egg Nogg	.25
Fruit Punch	.20
Coca-Cola	.15
Ginger Ale Cobbler	.25
Southern Fruit Soda	.25
Fruit Rickey	.15

Flavor: Pineapple, Strawberry, Chocolate, Vanilla, Cherry, Lemon, Banana, Root Beer, Raspberry, Orange, Butterscotch

PARFAITS—any flavor .25

SUNDAES

Marshmallow	.25
Chocolate Marshmallow	.30
Butterscotch	.25
Caramel	.25
Banana Split	.40
Pineapple	.30
Maraschino Cherry	.20
Creme de Menthe Cherry	.30
Orange-Ice Pineapple	.30
Fruit Salad	.30
Rum and Butter	.30
Maple Walnut	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]

FANCY SUNDAES

Pineapple Special	[illegible]
Chocolate Special	[illegible]
Banana Royal	[illegible]
Sweetheart	[illegible]
Merry Widow	[illegible]
Honeymoon	[illegible]
Boston Nut	[illegible]
Moonlight	[illegible]
Aeroplane	[illegible]
Four Tower	[illegible]
Honolulu Belle	[illegible]
Mount Baker	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]

DIAMOND GRILL MISCELLANEOUS

Chicken a la King, Casserole	90	Welsh Rarebit	65
Lobster a la Newburg	90	Golden Buck	75
Shrimp a la Newburg	85	Yorkshire Rarebit	75
Crabmeat a la Newburg	85	Cream Chicken on Toast	65
Fried Half Spring Chicken a la Maryland	1.65	Roast Beef, Hashed and Poached Egg	65
Chili Con Carne, Mexican	65	Diced Turkey, Hashed and Poached Egg	75
Heinz Pork and Beans	65	Fried Tomato and Bacon	70
Heinz Baked Kidney Beans	65	Fried Fresh Mushrooms in Butter	80
Baked Spaghetti and Cheese	65	Fried Apple Rings and Ham	65
Grilled Kidney and Bacon	65	Roasted Chicken and Jelly	70
Breaded Calf Sweetbread, Mushroom Sauce	75	Roasted Turkey, Cranberry Sauce	1.00
Fried Liver and Bacon or Onions	70		

FISH AND SHELLFISH

Half Doz. Fried Oysters	85	Fried Salmon Steak	70
Half Doz. Oysters Pepper Pan Roast	90	Fried Halibut Steak	70
Half Doz. Oysters, Stewed in Milk	85	Boiled Finnan Haddies	70
Fried Fresh Scallops and Bacon	85	Steamed Alaska Smoked Cod	70
Fresh Cracked Crab on Mayonnaise	75	Canned Sockeye Salmon	80
Breaded Fillet of Sole	65	Canned King Oscar Sardines	70
Baked Seafood Dinner au Gratin	75	Curry Shrimps and Boiled Rice	70
Fish and Chips	65		

SALADS

Chicken Salad	80	Lettuce and Tomato Salad	70
Lobster Salad	90	Lettuce and Egg Salad	70
Shrimp Salad	85	Combination Salad	70
Crabmeat Salad	85	Fresh Fruit Salad and Whipped Cream	80
Waldorf Salad	70	Stuffed Tomato with Chicken Salad	85
Salmon Salad	75		
Potato Salad	60		

DIAMOND GRILL CHOICE STEAKS AND CHOPS

Diamond Special Steak	1.60	Premium Ham Steak	1.30
Grilled Plain Steak	70	Grilled Pork Chops	85
Hamburger Steak and Onions	65	Breaded Pork Chops	90
Club Steak	1.25	Grilled Lamb Chops	90
Juicy Rib Steak	1.50	Breaded Lamb Chops	95
Sirloin Steak	1.75	Grilled Veal Chops	85
Native Top Sirloin Steak	1.75	Breaded Veal Chops	90
T-Bone Steak	1.70	Breaded Veal Cutlets	80
Beef Porterhouse Steak	2.25	Breaded Pork Cutlets	80
Beef Tenderloin Steak	1.65	Breaded Pork Tenderloin	1.00
Fillet Mignon, Aux Champignon	1.90	Fried Premium Weiners	65
Grilled Veal Porterhouse	1.15	Fried Pork Sausages	65
Combination Grill Chops	1.20		

SANDWICHES

Cold Chicken Sandwich	35	Hollywood Sandwich	[illegible]
Cold Turkey Sandwich	40	Club Sandwich	60
Cold Beef, Pork, Veal Ham, Tongue or Lamb Sandwich	30	Club House Sandwich	70
Devilled Egg Sandwich	25	Manhattan Sandwich	75
Salmon Sandwich	30	Tomato and Cucumber Sandwich	30
Sardine Sandwich	30	Lobster Sandwich	60
Lettuce and Tomato Sandwich	20	Crabmeat Sandwich	60
Fried Ham or Bacon Sandwich	30	Tender Steak Sandwich	55
Denver or Western Sandwich	35	Hot Chicken Sandwich	55
Hamburger Sandwich	30	Hot Turkey Sandwich	60
Cheese or Egg Sandwich	25	Hot Pork, Veal Beef, Lamb [illegible]	[illegible]
Ham or Bacon and Egg Sandwich	40	Fried Oyster Sandwich	[illegible]
		Veal Cutlet Sandwich	[illegible]

Potatoes and Vegetables Served with Hot Sandwiches — All Sandwiches on Toast [illegible]

Half Order Meals Served to Children [illegible]

DIAMOND GRILL

a la Carte Menu

★

BREAKFAST SPECIAL

Oatmeal and Milk	15	Hot Cakes and Syrup	35
Corn Flakes and Milk	15	Buckwheat Cakes and Syrup	30
Cream of Wheat and Milk	15	Dry or Butter Toast	15
Rice Krispies and Milk	15	Half of Grapefruit	15
Puffed Rice and Milk	15	Canned Peaches or Pears	25
Bran Flakes and Milk	15	Sliced Oranges	30
Grapenuts and Milk	15	Sliced Banana and Cream	35
All Bran and Milk	15	Stewed Prunes or Figs	20
Shredded Wheat and Milk	15	Apple Sauce	20
Puffed Wheat and Milk	15	Jam or Marmalade	15
Bread and Milk	20	Choice of Tomato, Apple Grapefruit or Orange Juice	15 [illegible]
Milk Toast	20	Honey	15
French Toast and Jelly	45	Any Cereal with Cream 10c Extra	
French Pancake and Jelly	55		

Side Order of Bacon, Ham, Sausages or Two Fried Eggs 25c Extra
Served with Hot Cakes Only

EGGS OR OMELETTES

Fried Egg, Single	~~35~~ 40	Denver Omelette	70
Two Eggs, Fried or Poached	50	Creamed Chicken Omelette	75
Two Eggs, Scrambled	50	Oyster Omelette	85
Two Eggs, Boiled	50	Western Omelette	70
Ham or Bacon and Eggs	75	Spanish Omelette	70
Fried Premium Ham or Bacon	75	Mushroom Omelette	75
Sausages and Eggs	70	Canadian Cheese Omelette	70
Pork Chop and Eggs	75	Tomato Omelette	70
Two Eggs Poached, Vienna Style	60	Chicken Denver Omelette	70
Plain Omelette	50	Creamed Shrimp Omelette	85
Ham or Bacon Omelette	75	Green Pepper Omelette	70
Scrambled Eggs with Mushrooms	70	Green Onion Omelette	70
Jelly Omelette	70		

SOUP TO ORDER

Chicken Rice	25	Consomme Clear	20	Clam Chowder	20
Chicken Noodle	25	Vegetables	25	Cream Celery	25
Cream Mushroom	25	Cream Tomato	25	Dinner Soup	15

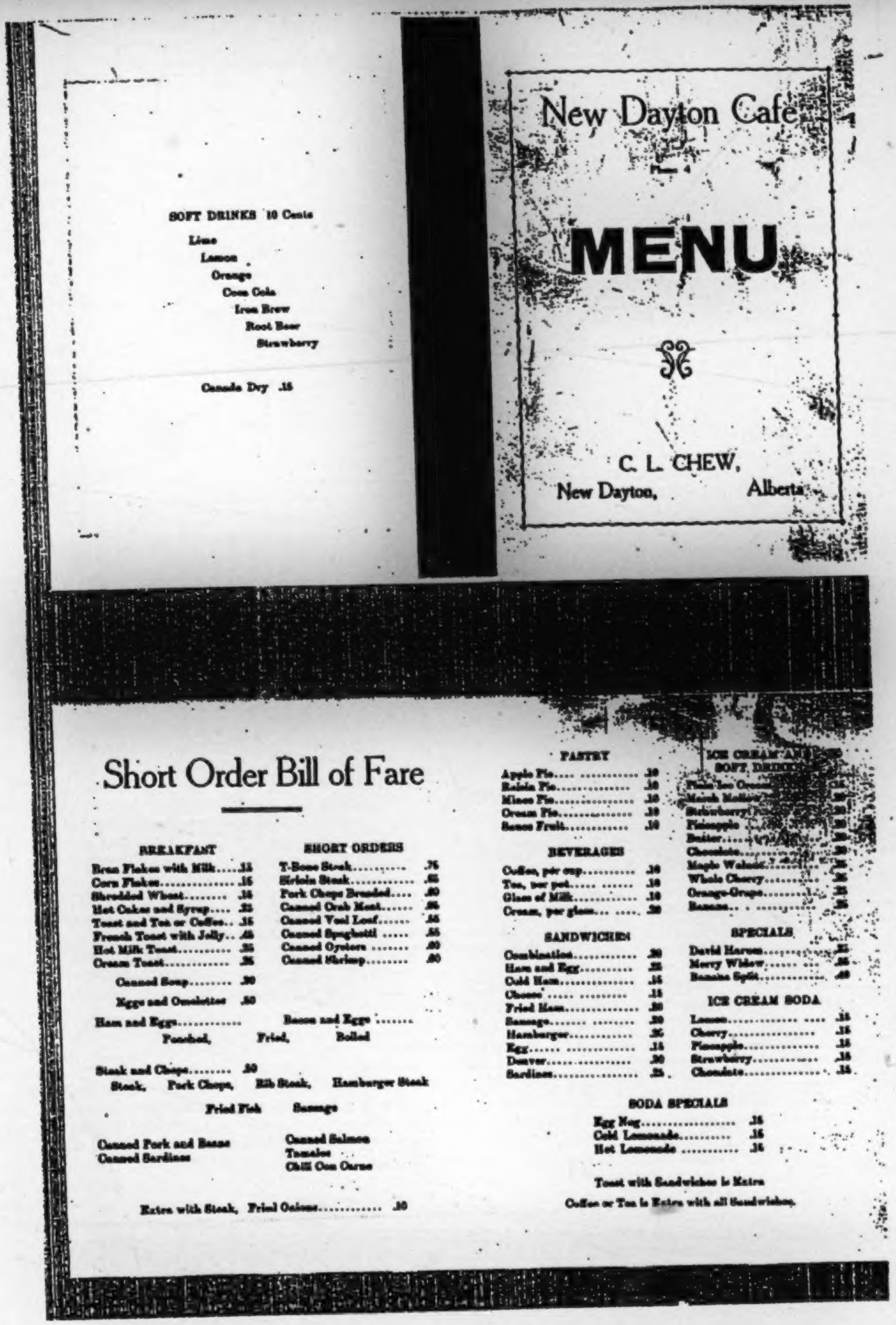
APPETIZERS AND RELISHES

Head Lettuce	20	Green Onions	25	Celery Heart	25
Sliced Tomato	25	Sliced Cucumber	25	Queen Olives	25
Dill Pickles	25	Sweet Pickles	25	Lobster Cocktail	[illegible] .55
Seafood Cocktail	50	Radishes	25	Shrimp Cocktail	50
Oyster Cocktail	45				

POTATOES AND VEGETABLES

French Fried Potatoes	20	Minced Potatoes in Cream	25
Julienne Fried Potatoes	25	Side Order of Mushrooms	50
Hashed Brown Potatoes	20	Stewed Tomato	25
Lyonnaise Potatoes	25	Green Peas	25
Sweet Potatoes, Side Order	25	Cut Green Beans	25
Pan Fried Potatoes	20	Stewed Corn	25
Potatoes Au Gratin	25	Fried Onions	25
Potatoes O'Brien	25	Cold Slaw	15

Half Order Meals Served to Children [illegible]



SOFT DRINKS 10 Cents

Lime
Lemon
Orange
Coca Cola
Iron Brew
Root Beer
Strawberry

Canada Dry .15

New Dayton Cafe
Phone 4

MENU

C. L. CHEW,
New Dayton, Alberta

Short Order Bill of Fare

BREAKFAST

Bran Flakes with Milk	.15
Corn Flakes	.15
Shredded Wheat	.15
Hot Cakes and Syrup	.25
Toast and Tea or Coffee	.15
French Toast with Jelly	.45
Hot Milk Toast	.25
Cream Toast	.35

Canned Soup........ .30

Eggs and Omelettes .50

Ham and Eggs............ Bacon and Eggs ....
Poached, Fried, Boiled

Steak and Chops........ .50
Steak, Pork Chops, Rib Steak, Hamburger Steak
Fried Fish Sausage

Canned Pork and Beans
Canned Sardines

Canned Salmon
Tamales
Chili Con Carne

Extra with Steak, Fried Onions............ .10

SHORT ORDERS

T-Bone Steak	.75
Sirloin Steak	.65
Pork Chops Breaded	.60
Canned Crab Meat	.65
Canned Veal Loaf	.55
Canned Spaghetti	.55
Canned Oysters	.60
Canned Shrimp	.60

PASTRY

Apple Pie	.10
Raisin Pie	.10
Mince Pie	.10
Cream Pie	.10
Sauce Fruit	.10

BEVERAGES

Coffee, per cup	.10
Tea, per pot	.10
Glass of Milk	.10
Cream, per glass	.20

SANDWICHES

Combination	.30
Ham and Egg	.25
Cold Ham	.15
Cheese	.15
Fried Ham	.20
Sausage	.20
Hamburger	.25
Egg	.15
Denver	.30
Sardines	.25

ICE CREAM AND SOFT DRINKS

Plain Ice Cream	.15
Marsh Mallow	.20
Strawberry	.20
Pineapple	.20
Butter	.20
Chocolate	.20
Maple Walnut	.25
Whole Cherry	.25
Orange-Grape	.25
Banana	.25

SPECIALS

David Harum	.25
Merry Widow	.25
Banana Split	.40

ICE CREAM SODA

Lemon	.15
Cherry	.15
Pineapple	.15
Strawberry	.15
Chocolate	.15

SODA SPECIALS

Egg Nog	.15
Cold Lemonade	.15
Hot Lemonade	.15

Toast with Sandwiches is Extra

Coffee or Tea is Extra with all Sandwiches.

Fig. 5 New Dayton Café Menu, 1920s

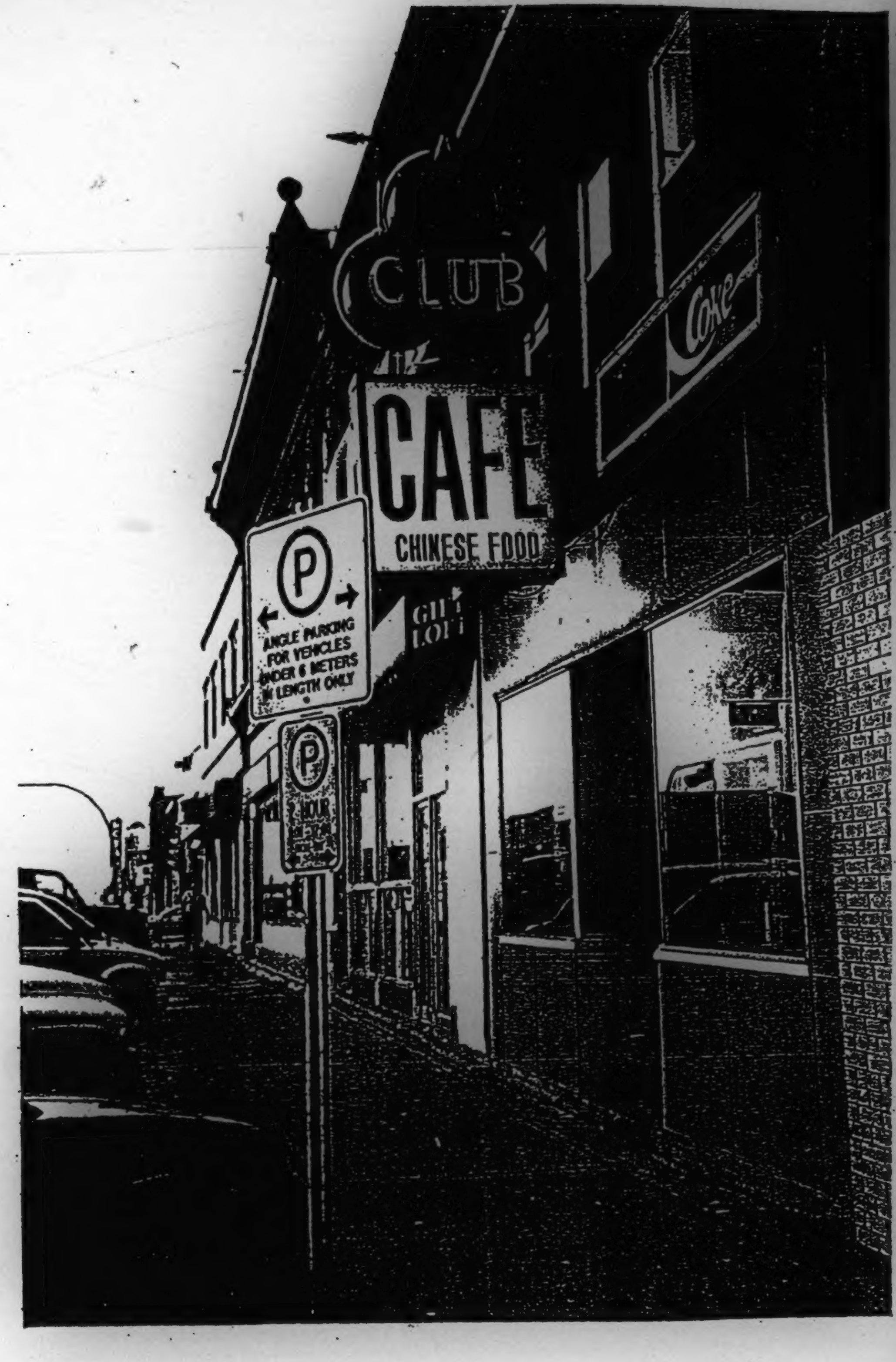
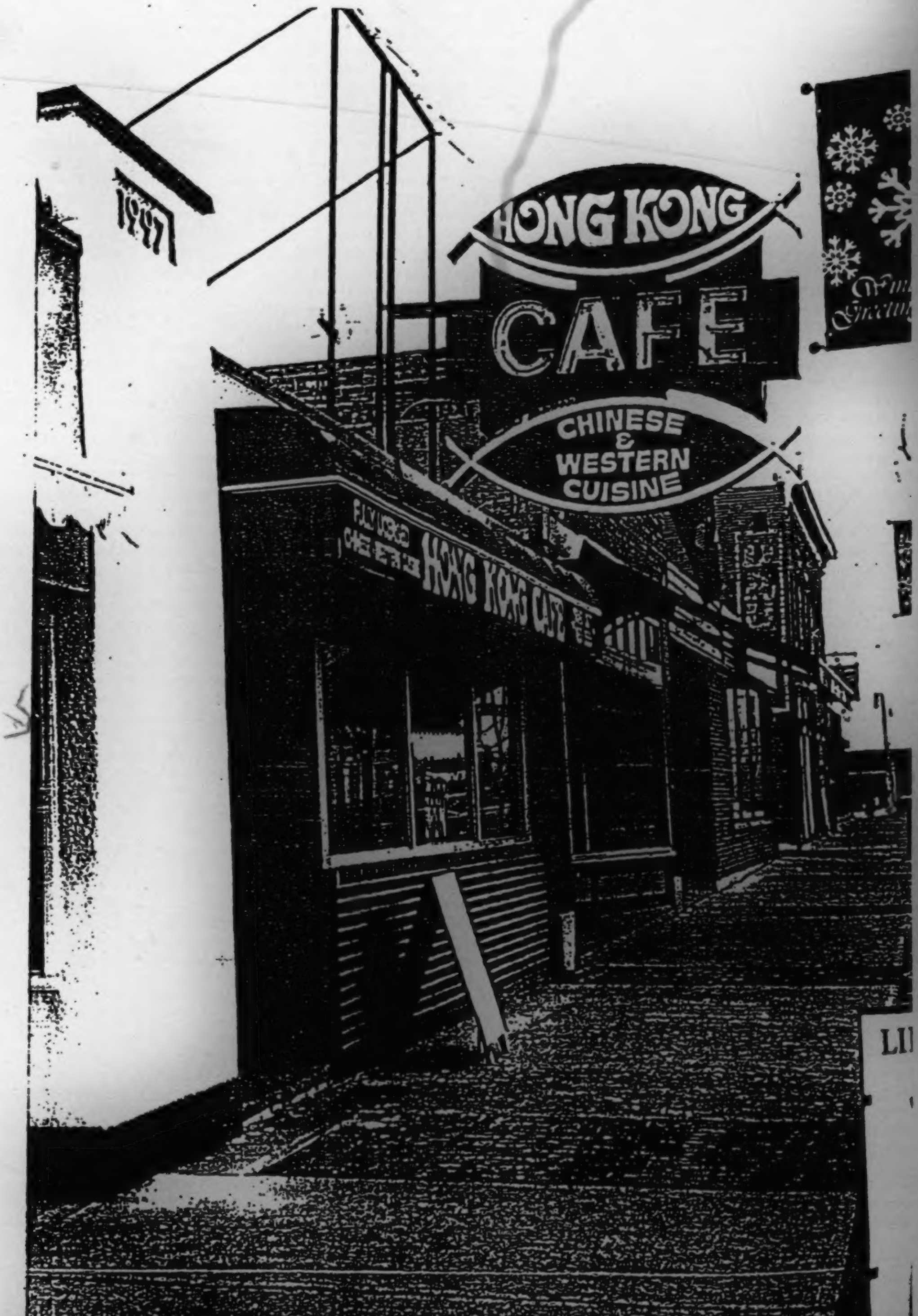

CLUB
CAFE
CHINESE FOOD
Coke
P
ANGLE PARKING FOR VEHICLES UNDER 6 METERS IN LENGTH ONLY
P
2 HOUR
GIFT LOFT

Fig. 6. Club Café, Innisfail, Alberta and Hong Kong Café, Ponoko. Alberta. 1999.


1947
HONG KONG
CAFE
CHINESE
&
WESTERN
CUISINE
HONG KONG CAFE

Introduction

The sidewalk ends at the N.D. Café. Clumps of prairie grass sprout up along the edge of the sidewalk separating it from the unpaved road in front. A solitary streetlamp towers above the café a short distance past the end of the sidewalk. Obviously, nobody walks here anymore but people might drive by on their way somewhere else. The café itself is a one-story building with a small addition (kitchen? living quarters?) jutting out of one side. The front windows have all been broken and are now draped with plastic. Someone must still care about the building. The modest false front is still bright, white, with the letters "N. D. Café" painted clearly in black. The paint on the side of the building, sanded down by the wind, peels away in great strips. It stands alone, solitary on a street that seems more solitary still. I wonder what else would have stood beside it. I wonder whether the people who ran the café were ever as lonely as the building seems to be now. The grey-blue prairie sky, the colour of a threatening summer thunderstorm, looms enormous in the background.

The photograph has no date. It came to me in the post from an anonymous radio listener after the local public radio station broadcasted a short interview they had conducted with me about a project that, at the time, I could only vaguely describe.[1] I knew it would have something to do with restaurants like the N.D. Café even though, at the time, I did not know that the N.D. Café existed. I knew it had something to do with the people who would have lived and worked at the restaurant even though, at the time, I did not know their names. I knew it had to do with wanting to make sense of the presence of the N.D. Café, and other restaurants like this, on the main streets of towns like New Dayton, Alberta.

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[1] My deepest thanks to this listener and to all the others who wrote and called with their enthusiasm for the project and their memories. My thanks also to Judy Hamill at CBC

In 1917, Hoy Fat Leong came to New Dayton, Alberta, Canada, with his son Charlie Chew Leong.[2] They owned and operated the first restaurant in New Dayton, buying the land from Jim Reid on installments. The New Dayton Café had two tables and a counter top. In 1923, the restaurant was destroyed by fire. Charlie re-built the café and the new restaurant had four tables, stools, a glass counter and modern gas lamps (a big improvement on the old kerosene ones). There was a soda fountain and you could order from a small but varied menu which included canned veal and spaghetti, tamales and chili con carne. There was no Chinese food on the menu at all although Charlie Chew had printed his name right on the front of the menu under the title "proprietor." You would dial "4" to reach the restaurant through the local switchboard.

In 1995 Calgary's Folio Gallery published a series of black and white photographs by George Webber titled Requiem: the Vanishing Face of the Canadian Prairie. Two photographs of the N.D. Café are a part of the series. In one, "Abandoned Café," a fluorescent tube hangs over the empty restaurant interior. The glass counter has been ripped out and the drawers and cupboards are empty. The old cash register has been taken out and there is a hole in the wall where it once sat. The linoleum is coming up from the floorboards. You can see where the glass counter stood by the color of the

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Radio One, Edmonton, for insisting that I do the interview even though I thought I didn't have anything to say.

[2] This information would have been impossible to find without the help of the archivists at the Galt Museum in Lethbridge, Alberta, and the New Dayton Historical Society. My sincere thanks to them for their help.

linoleum. In the second photograph, "Mr. and Mrs. Chew," Charlie and his wife stand in front of a glass counter filled with goods before the closing of the café. The photograph was taken in 1988. They are old. In both photographs, there is the sense, as the subtitle to Requiem suggests, of things in the process of vanishing, on the verge of disappearance. The New Dayton Café, a Chinese restaurant that no longer exists in a town that no longer exists, seems to exemplify an object of disappearance on the Canadian small town landscape. Like the prairie grain elevator, it seems as though its time has passed, that the ones that do remain are little more than anachronistic reminders of another time, another history.

But has it really disappeared? After all, you can still drive into almost any small town in Canada and expect to find a Chinese restaurant. Chinese people still seem to work in them. While the N.D. Café has closed its doors, another Chinese restaurant in the New Dayton area (now officially a part of greater Lethbridge) has taken its place. A requiem is for that which has passed, that which has died. While I find the idea of a requiem contradictory and perhaps premature given that, to all intents and purposes, neither the prairie, nor the Chinese restaurants which dot the landscape of its small towns, can be considered to have passed on, what interests me even more is the *persuasiveness* of the narrative, of the news of its death and passing. Not only does the idea of a requiem for the prairie *seem* to make sense, but the situating of the N.D. Café and Charlie Chew at the heart of the requiem also *seems* natural. And yet, what is normal about announcing the death of something that has not died? And how has the migration of Hoy Fat Leong and Charlie Chew Leong to a small, dusty town where there were no other Chinese people, where the possibilities for loneliness and isolation must have been as big as the prairie sky, become such a naturalized feature of small town Canadian life? Too old to be recuperated within the new narratives of multiculturalism and too new to be a proper object of wistful histories (although it is certainly getting there) the Chinese restaurant in small town Canada is an awkward reminder of the ways in which modernity sometimes stammers, prematurely announcing the death of that which is not yet dead. The persuasiveness of the narrative of the requiem signals the readiness with which we declare the passing of that which is too old for the present and not quite old enough for "real" history. It is what Meaghan Morris recalls in quite a different context, as that which comes too soon, too late.[3]

Within the contradictions of being too soon, too late, the Chinese restaurant poses a problem for a modernity that wants to move on without it. It is strangely visible and yet invisible – a sign of the passing of time and the death of prairie life, and yet still the place to get the best french fries in town. It is at once everywhere (there is almost no small town in the prairies without a Chinese restaurant) yet nowhere in contemporary discussions of Chinese immigration, diasporas, Canadian multiculturalism, transnational migration patterns, global movements of people and capital, and so on. One of the central concerns of my dissertation is the paradox of visibility. The small town restaurant seems to have no place in the way we talk about Chineseness in Canada except perhaps as a feature of that which has passed on and is now past. This paradox points to a bias in discussions of diaspora and transnationalism where there is a presumption of the trajectories of migration. Diasporic subjects are almost without exception presumed to arrive in the metropolitan spaces of the first world. My dissertation emerges out of a concern with the way in which diaspora studies as it is currently practiced seems to have no place for spaces such as the N.D. Café and people such as Charlie Chew except as seemingly unfortunate features of a forgettable past.

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[3] In a preface written in memoriam to Claire Johnston, Morris shares Paul Willemen's interpretation of the film by Jean-Marie Straub and Danielle Huillet called Trop Tôt Trop Tard (Too Soon Too Late) noting that "there is a need 'for things being *both* too soon and too late' if 'even a moment' of eventfulness is to be possible… [T]his, more than

Too often, the fact of dispersion has been more definitive of the diasporic subject than the problem of arrival. While it seems obvious that not all diasporic subjects end up in cities of the first world, we nonetheless address cities such as London, New York, Vancouver, Sydney, Los Angeles and Toronto as the natural locations of diasporas. Stretching the limits of the urban, suburban extensions of first world cities such as Vancouver's Richmond, Los Angeles' Monterey Park and Toronto's Mississauga have become de facto sites of a middle class Chinese diaspora which has "moved up" from the tenements of Chinatown.

The problem lies in a homogenization of diasporic trajectories where metropolitan arrival is more often than not presumed. Embedded within this presumption is a notion of progress. In this narrative, the migrant moves from a more "backward" part of the world in order to arrive on the shores of a shimmering first world metropolis replete with ethnically insular neighbhourhoods where they will be able to get by, at least at first, without having to learn the dominant language. This is a story that sounds familiar because it is the one that we hear about most often. It is not that thinking of the city as a site of arrival is itself historically progressivist, but that it betrays a presumption of the trajectory of diasporic movement which elides other histories.

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anything to do with a 'postmodern' pragmatism, describes the activating principle of

One of the commitments of this project is to look at the ways in which diasporas as communities which form not on the basis of imaginary connections to an imaginary homeland (as Salman Rushdie suggests)[4]; nor on the basis of a collective historical wound that must be constantly nursed as "ethnic abjection" (as Rey Chow suggests)[5]; nor even along the problematic lines of racial and/or religious identification (as Avtar Brah and Khachig Tololyan, among others, suggest)[6]. All of these positions are valuable in that they describe particular conditions of diasporic subjectivity. However, it seems to me that much of diaspora theory has worried a great deal about the descriptive elements of the diasporic, about being able to name and distinguish the diasporic from the ethnic, the racially segregated, the traumatized and dislocated. This anxiety over who might count as diasporic suggests not only the capaciousness of the category of diaspora, but also the ontologization of diasporic agency in current discussions.

The conclusion of Homi Bhabha's "DissemiNation" illuminates precisely this ontologizing of diasporic agency. In a phrase that captures the spirit of diaspora, Bhabha notes that his essay is about "scattering of people that in other times and other places becomes a gathering" (139). At the close of the essay, Bhabha writes:

> If I began with the scattering of people across countries, I want to end with their gathering in the city. The return of the diasporic; the postcolonial… it is to the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diasporic come to change the history of the nation… in the West, and increasingly elsewhere, it is the city which provides

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Claire Johnston's feminist film theory" (xxiii).

[4] Please see Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands."

[5] Please see Chow, "The Secrets of Ethnic Abjection" and "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem."

[6] Please see Brah, in particular p. 181-195 and Tololyan, "Rethinking Diaspora(s)."

> the space which emergent identifications and new social movements are played out. It is there that, in our time, the perplexity of living is most acutely experienced. (169-170)

Bhabha's conclusion, his invocation of the city as the site of diaspora's challenge to history, is symptomatic of discussions of diasporas which presume metropolitan trajectories. Not only does Bhabha venerate the first world city as the site of diasporic arrival, the closing arguments of "DissemiNation" suggest an understanding of diasporic agency based on the *presence* of diasporic subjects. Thus, the figure of Gibreel Farishta in Bhabha's reading of Satanic Verses interrupts and splits the time of the western nation by the spectre of his existence: "[Gibreel] is the history that happened elsewhere, overseas; his postcolonial, migrant *presence* does not evoke a harmonious patchwork of cultures, but articulates the narrative of cultural difference which can never let the national history look at itself narcissistically in the eye" (Bhabha 168, my emphasis). For Bhabha, Gibreel haunts the west by the fact of his presence and his challenge to the coherence of the west's history of itself lies is an ontological one.[7]

This understanding of agency as being primarily based in "being there," in a notion of presence, goes some way towards explaining the anxiety of diaspora theory around positively identifying the subject of diaspora. If agency is inherent in the state of being diasporic, of being, for example, the nonconforming thorn in the side of whiteness' desires for homogenous cultural dominance, then it would be very important to know who is diasporic and who is not. However, shifting our understanding of diasporic trajectories to embrace the non-metropolitan enables a discussion of diasporic agency to exceed the ontological. Even though the number of people who identify as Chinese living in small towns is numerically insignificant when compared with urban populations, exploring the effects of their non-metropolitan settlement opens up a view of diasporic agency which is not only about the gathering of scattered peoples, but about the mode of their gathering, the ways in which they understand themselves to be within communities that straddle not only the local and the global, but also those of the past and those of the present. Rather than identifying positively those who are diasporic, I want to shift the problem away from that of classification and description and towards a consideration of the conditions which make diasporic community possible. My hope is that shifting our perception of diasporic arrival to include those who do not "land" in the cities of the first world will make possible the conditions whereby non-metropolitan arrival can be understood as crucial for our ideas of diasporic resistance, agency and community.

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[7] As I will note in further detail in Chapter One, this understanding of diaspora's challenge to the west is not specific to Bhabha, but symptomatic of discussions of diasporic agency in texts such as Avtar Brah's Cartographies of Diaspora, Leela Gandhi's discussion of "postnational futures," and Khachig Tololyan's meditation on "stateless power" in "Re-thinking Diasporas."

The N.D. Café, and the restaurants that came before, after and around it, enable a consideration of the possibilities of another story of diasporic arrival. The undated photograph from the un-named photographer opens up for us a crack in the story of the Chinese migration in Canada. It is a dialectical image which, as Eduardo Cadava notes with regard to the use of photography in Benjamin's writing, "interrupts history and opens up another possibility of history, one that spaces time and temporalizes space" (61). This project falls headlong into this interruption. I want to look for the ways in which the New Dayton Café has not so much disappeared, but has been submerged, and to look at what it means to recover it, and other spaces like it, as crucial sites of diasporic arrival.

Attention to non-metropolitan spaces keeps us from flattening out the story of Chinese diasporic migration. It troubles the boundaries between what Vijay Mishra and Gayatri Spivak have marked as the old diasporas of slavery and indenture and the new diasporas of transnational migration.[8] Specifically, this dissertation addresses the progressivist edge underlying much of the discussion not only in the non-academic references to Chinese migration, but also Chinese diaspora studies itself. George Webber's requiem is not unique in that diaspora studies has also largely put people like Charlie Chew into the space of the past. There is a sense that no one goes to small towns anymore, that what really matters are the increasingly multicultural mega-cities of the first world. And yet, it is precisely at the moment when we declare something outdated that our own investments in the dating of things, their situatedness in history, reveals itself.

Not only does Chinese settlement in small towns across Canada have a long history, this settlement also profoundly affected the restaurant industry in Canada. As Edgar Wickberg notes in his history of Chinese immigration, one of the primary types of early Chinese communities could be found

> in those places where a large number of Chinese worked for non-Chinese companies. The largest enterprise was, of course, railway construction, but there were similar communities at the coal mines in and near Wellington, at the sawmills in Burrard Inlet, near the fish canneries in New Westminster and

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[8] Please see Mishra's "The diasporic imaginary" and Spivak's "Diasporas old and new."

> Skeena, and on farms at Harrison, Clinton, Cache Creek, and 150 Mile House. (24-5)

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, in conjunction with the building of the railway, Chinese immigration extended westward beyond British Columbia. Wickberg observes that "[t]he railway greatly affected the distribution of Chinese communities on the mainland of British Columbia" (24). Not only did Chinese communities develop outside of urban centers such as Vancouver and Victoria, but the census figures also show that Chinese immigrants arguably changed the restaurant industry in Canada. According to the 1931 Canadian census, Chinese made up less than one percent of the Canadian population, and yet one out of every five restaurant, café, or tavern keepers was of Chinese origin. More than one out of every three male cooks was Chinese (Reiter 30). As Wickberg's work on the Canadian census shows, forty percent of Chinese people in Alberta in 1921 worked in the restaurant industry (310). That number rose to sixty percent in 1931. The numbers are even higher in Saskatchewan where fifty percent of Chinese immigrants worked in restaurants in 1921 and seventy percent in 1931 (Wickberg 310). These dramatic effects upon the restaurant industry did not occur in the Chinatowns of Vancouver, Calgary or Toronto, but in small towns across the country. While statistics can only be a part of the story, these numbers do suggest that looking at Chinese restaurants in terms of diaspora culture means looking at the small town restaurants which are connected to the legacy of early migration and which continue to serve up "Chinese and Canadian food" on the main streets of towns such as Ponoka, Swift Current, and Nelson today.

My call for a turn to the non-urban is not simply about a locational or purely geographic shift, but a conceptual one. In The Country and the City, Raymond Williams writes that "[t]he country and the city are changing historical realities, both in themselves and in their interrelations" (289). I take from Williams' consideration of the city and the country the understanding that these are conceptual categories where the historical is produced by a set of conceptual narratives. In a similar vein, the non-metropolitan space of my inquiry is a conceptual category as much as it is a material site. The overlooking of the idea of the non-urban in discussions of Chinese diaspora also indicates a discomfort with the nonmodern as a feature of the present. Indeed, those who arrive to work in the kitchens of Chinese restaurants do seem very far removed from the modern multinational entrepreneur with his handful of passports and tri-mode mobile phone. The small town Chinese restaurant illuminates a collusion between the idea of the non-urban and that of the nonmodern in the increasingly triumphalist accounts of Asian arrival. In this latter vision, we are sons of the yellow empire, we are no longer "coolies" and laundry workers, but rule ungrounded empires and networks of transnational capital. And yet, the collapsing of contemporary Chinese dishwashers and short order cooks with the nonmodern belies a historicist investment. I read in the relegating of the non-urban to the nonmodern a divorcing of the modern from the historically constitutive; that is, the desire to keep the past in the past is also the desire to keep the past from intruding into the present.

In this dissertation, I draw principally on three related theoretical approaches: cultural and feminist materialism, postcolonialism and diaspora theory. These approaches often overlap. It is even arguable that postcolonial and diaspora theories are not necessarily distinguishable. However, as I discuss below and in more detail in Chapter One, there are important differences as well as affinities between postcolonial and diaspora work. While I have read across a number of disciplines in the course of my research , including anthropology, sociology, history, ethnomusicology and literary criticism, I have consistently turned to cultural and feminist materialism, postcolonialism and diaspora theory in order to understand how my readings in different disciplines work within the project overall. I hope to have constructed what Gramsci calls a "specific method" adapted to the demands of this research . As Gramsci notes with regard to the problem of methodology,

> [i]t has to be established that every research has its own specific method and constructs its own specific science… To think that one can advance the progress of a work of scientific research by applying to it a standard method, chosen because it has given good results in another field of research… is a strange delusion which has little to do with science. (438-9).

Because the dissertation deals with a variety of texts, including colonial archival documents, rumours, food, menus, folks songs, and poetry, the research engages with a number of disciplines. Rather than a standard methodology, I have developed and elaborated my methods for the specific research questions which frame each set of texts, and each chapter. In this sense, this dissertation is broadly interdisciplinary in methodology, and this interdisciplinarity is grounded in a set of theoretical commitments.

From cultural materialism, I take the understanding that culture is not a reflection of a community, but functions constitutively. It is productive within social processes. This means that I understand the Chinese restaurant not as a reflection of Chineseness or small town Canadian culture, but as a cultural site that is productive of Chineneseness, Canadianness, small town Canadian culture, and diasporic culture more broadly. As Stuart Hall argues in relation to Caribbean and black British cinema:

> We have been trying to theorize identity as constituted, not outside but within representation; and hence of cinema not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already existis, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak. ("Cultural" 402)

Similarly, Chinese food on the menu of small town Chinese restaurants in Canada is not a reflection of Chinese diaspora culture but a form of representation which enables the constitution of alternative and possibly subversive subjectivities. Of course, a restaurant is more than the food that it serves – it has an architecture; it is a gathering space; it is the kitchen and the dining area and the swinging doors which connect the two; it is the menu and the space of the counter. As Rebecca Sprang's history of the rise of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French restaurant makes clear, the restaurant became a restaurant through a specific economic and political history. The things which make up the restaurant, which distinguish it from other public eating spaces, emerge out of this history. Moreover, the things which distinguish the small town Chinese restaurant from other restaurants also emerge out of a specific history which is related not only to the rise of the European restaurant as a cultural insitution, but also to the history of migrant Chinese labour in Canada.

My understanding of the restaurant is grounded in thinking of the restaurant not as a cultural object, but as a culturally productive space which emerges out of this specific history. While work on food culture and foodways in sociology and anthropology has helped me shape my thinking, these analyses tend to focus on the meanings that can be read into the consumption of food rather than that which comes out of the *interactions* around food in the restaurant. While it is tempting to read a semiotics of the menu through the kind of work that Mary Douglas or Margaret Visser have accomplished in their readings of menus and the rituals of dining,[9] this type of reading risks assuming a sameness to the experience of eating Chinese. As Meaghan Morris notes in her work on shopping centres, one of the most common responses she received during the course of her research was that of the presumption of the sameness of these structures: "One question comes up almost invariably for academic women with whom I've discussed the topic of shopping centres. They say, 'Yes, you do semiotics… are you looking at how malls are all the same everywhere? laid out systematically, everyone can read them?'" (66-7).

For me, the question has been invariably, "Yes, you work on Chinese restaurants… are you looking at how this fake Chinese food, chop suey and so on, is a signal of how they dupe white people?" While the producing of reputedly "non-Chinese" food for white consumption is certainly a part of what I explore, it is also important to remember that Chinese food wasn't always on the menu. And what does it mean to think of chop suey as fake anyway? And the other question: "There is really real Chinese food, isn't there? I know when I go to eat somewhere with 'X' (who is invariably Asian) I get different things than when I go with my family…" What can I say except that the serving of Chinese food, not just the food itself, seems to be something of a lodestone of white anxiety? The semiotics of the menu is largely interesting insofar as it is invariably read for me by others, overdetermined by anxiety, and thus an indication of the necessity of a cultural materialist approach that takes into account the specific and suppressed histories embedded within Chinese restaurants.

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[9] Please see Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal" and Visser, The Rituals of Dinner.

My approach to the Chinese restaurant as a cultural site owes much to Meaghan Morris' work on shopping centres. In "Things to Do with Shopping Centers" Morris demands a critically differentiated understanding of the shopping centers. For Morris, shopping centers may be "*minimally* readable" as being the same everywhere, but looking at the differences between shopping centers "involves predicating a more complex and localized *affective* relation to shopping spaces, and to their links with other sites of domestic and familial labour, than does the scenario of the cruising grammarian reading similiarity from place to place" (67). While much of this project looks at the affinities between restaurants – to looking at how they constitute a collectivity rather than an isolated phenomenon – what I take from Morris' work is the commitment to the specific histories of cultural sites and an emphasis on the productivity of the interactions between people and places. In this sense I examine the restaurant as an actively localized space. I explore the multiple interactions situated within and around the space of the restaurant in order to arrive at a sense of the ways in which these interactions produce the culture of the restaurant.

Further, these are interactions which also carry with them historical registers. As Morris notes, a history of the particular "can assume that if [shopping] centers and their myths are transformed by 'users,' then the history itself must count as a use that involves engaging with other women's ideas about shopping centers over *time*" (78). From texts such as folk songs of popular musicians such as Joni Mitchell and Sylvia Tyson, the menus of the restaurants themselves, as well as the photography of George Webber, and the art installations of Gu Xiong and Andrew Hunter, the story of Chinese restaurants has been transformed by diners not only over time, but for particular uses. One of the problems the dissertation takes up, then, is the problem of reading of alternative histories within the use of history. That is, reading for that which is at the edges of Mitchell and Tyson's nostalgia, or Hunter and Xiong's personal histories reconstructed through the space of the Chinese restaurant.

As I discuss in the following chapters, in order for Europe-in-Canada to be progressive, its others must be perpetually suspended in a state of timelessness, of ahistoricism. In contrast, an exploration of the Chinese restaurant brings forward the possibility of a subject that is not only historically constituted, but also a subject constituted within a different history, within memory. The problem of memory is one that I understand as the problem of grasping the transmisison of the past that takes place without institutional legitimation. In Chapter Five, I explore memory in diaspora within the project of dehistoricizing history.

While a project on Chinese restaurants in small town Canada may not seem obviously postcolonial, this dissertation is nevertheless indebted to postcolonial theory. I take from postcolonial theory its engagement with the category of history and the way in which it produces this critique of historicism through an understanding of agency and resistance.

Like cultural materialism and feminist materialism, postcolonial theory offers a critique of the European historicism where , as Hennessy puts it, "history, as one of the narratives of a culture, is always an intervention in the present" (xvii). As Stephen Slemon notes in relation to Robert Young's critique of Hegelian history in White Mythologies, "from the perspective of the colonized, any unitary notion of human 'progress' or 'development' may be seen to carry with it the appalling risk of justifying the 'White Man's Burden' of globalizing enlightenment" (109). I take from postcolonialism's critique of progress and development an understanding of alternative histories which are not simply supplemental to the "real" history of the world, but foundational to it. Dipesh Chakrabarty's argument for "provincializing Europe" opens up a way of thinking about the "nonmodern," that which is seemingly anachronistic, backward and outdated, within modernity. "Subaltern pasts are signposts of [the border between the modern and the nonmodern]. With them we reach the limits of the discourse of history… subaltern pasts do not give the historian any principle of narration that can be rationally defended in modern public life" (Chakrabarty 110). And "[t]hus the writing of history must implicitly assume a plurality of times existing together, a disjuncture of the present with itself. Making visible this disjuncture is what subaltern pasts allow us to do" (Chakrabarty 109). Chakrabarty's concept of the "time-knot" of subaltern history can also be related to Homi Bhabha's idea of the time-lag where temporal disjucture opens up a way of critiquing historicism while positing the legitimacy of alternative histories. For Bhabha,

> [t]he challenge to modernity comes in redefining the signifying relation to a disjunctive 'present': staging the past as *symbol*, myth, memory, history, the ancenstral – but a past whose iterative *value as sign* reinscribes the "lessons of the past" into the very textuality of the present that determines both the identification

> with, and the interrogation of, modernity… The possibility of inciting cultural translations across minority discourses arises because of the disjunctive present of modernity. (247)

Within this idea of a "caesura in the narrative of modernity" (Bhabha 246), the disjuncture of the nonmodern becomes a space for the articulation of submerged histories. Postcolonialism's approach to the nonmodern creates a space in which to think beyond the Chinese restaurant's seeming outdatedness and to engage seriously with folk stories about sweet and sour pork, the irrational longing for a taste one knows but cannot name, the possibilities of transgenerational anger and transindividual memory.

I also take from postcolonialism an understanding of agency and resistance which emerges, in part, from this engagement with history. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams note in their Introduction to Colonial Discoures and Postcolonial Theory that a pessimistically postmodern approach to agency which suggests that resistance is always already allowed for in advance by dominant ideology "fails to deal with the awkward fact that oppositional movements do occur – including Marxist ones – and do sometimes win" (6). However, rather than envisaging "winning," postcolonial theory has been most useful for this project by theorizing resistance and agency through the understanding of agency as dispersed across collectivities where the victories are never so clear . As I note in Chapter One, Ranajit Guha's examination of the role of the chapati in the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 provides a valuable model for reading the resistance of Chinese inhabitants of Hong Kong during the bread poisoning of 1857. Postcolonialism puts forward the possibility of reading for agency outside of the single, autonomous subject of history. This conception of agency within collectivities is particularly important for a project such as this one which seeks to locate resistance within communities that have not only been dispersed, but are also deeply isolated in that dispersion. After all, I do not simply want to identify the similarities between Charlie Chew at the N.D. Café, New Dayton, Alberta, and Fred Wah at the Diamond Grill, Nelson, British Columbia, but to understand the ways in which their work is situated within a community that emerges across, and transforms, space and time.

This project is enabled by diaspora theory, but also an engagement with it. I take from the ground-breaking work of diaspora critics an understanding of community which is deeply contested and yet nontheless persistently present. This is an understanding of community which crosses geographical boundaries and is bound by something which is not only race, not only class, not only histories of dislocation, but all of these things and something more which exceeds them. Part of the work of this dissertation, Chapter Five in particular, lies in exploring what that "something more" might be.

In this commitment to comprehending the mechanisms of community in diaspora while at the same time questioning the bases of these mechanisms (I think for example of the extended debate on race and diaspora raised by Paul Gilroy, Rey Chow and David Scott), diaspora theory shares some of the goals of feminism. As Meaghan Morris notes, "Whatever their differences, most feminisms have been marked, at least in their creative political phase, by an experimental approach to the present, a desire to shape the future, and an enterprising attitude towards the past. In other words, feminism is skeptical but *constructive*" (xiv-xv). Diaspora studies can be and has been skeptical of many things: of what it is that brings diasporas together as diaspora; of how to understand the histories of diasporas; of postcolonialism; of race; of nationalism and nation-states. But it is also constructive in its commitment to the possibility of community despite dispersal and dislocation.

The double movement of diaspora theory's skepticism and constructiveness has helped me to grasp the ways in which the Chinese restaurant as both a problematic site of cultural identification and a location of Chinese diaspora culture. Paul Gilroy's work on the Black Atlantic opens up a way of thinking about the black diaspora which is constituted by the memory of slavery. However, Rey Chow shares with Gilroy a deep skepticism for race and ethnicity as bases for diasporic community. As Chow argues, "[p]art of the goal of 'writing diaspora' is… to *unlearn* that submission to one's ethnicity such as Chineseness even as one continues to support movements for democracy and human rights in China, Hong Kong, and elsewhere" (WD 25). One of the responses to this skepticism can be read in the turn of some diaspora critics to re-thinking the role of history and the category of history in the context of diaspora. This turn shares with postcolonial criticism the desire for history that is outside of the authoritative narrative, that which has been overlooked, suppressed or forgotten. Vijay Mishra's theorization of the space of the *jahaji-bhai*, the ship brotherhood and sisterhood which emerged out of the experience of the ship in the passage of indentured migrants from India, makes possible a consideration of the passage as palpably in the present. David Scott points to this sense of connection across time and space, with reference to Kamau Braithwaite, acknowledges as "an obscure miracle of connection," as that which is neither for nor against essentialism, but which understands diasporic community as constituted within an "evocation of a community of those for whom slavery is the name of a trial and a tribulation, and Africa the name of identity/difference" (127). In the spirit of Scott, this dissertation explores ways of understanding the Chinese diaspora, through restaurants such as the N.D. Café, as communities for whom indenture and migrant labouring is the name of a trial that is not just a feature of the past, and China not simply a homeland spurned or lost. After all, the inevitable double question that the racially marked subject must bear over and over again – Where are you from? No, no, where are you *really* from? – signals that entities such as "China" have to mean something more than just geo-political spaces or coherent zones of cultural difference. That incredulous double question – incredulous because it disbelieves any answer other than the one it already knows – also signals the necessity of recognizing the history of involuntary dislocations within a present that seeks to retain history as merely a feature of the past.

I take also from diaspora theory a commitment to re-thinking the category of history that it shares with postcolonial and materialist theories. As Morris recognizes with regard to the feminist movement in general and feminist cultural materialism specifically,

> [f]eminist discourse often stammers when it comes to validating action with a logic of events; it is not that logic is renounced, or history deemed chaotic, but that there is a struggle to name a different temporality ("*not* the sort of revolution which is an event that takes two or three days"…) that might make a *feminist* concept of eventfulness historically intelligible. (xv)

Morris suggests that there is a different register of temporality and history for comprehending the work of feminism. Echoing Morris, the diasporic struggle to name a different temporality emerges in Gilroy's articulation of the "living memory of the changing same" (198), or Braithwaite's "african season on a caribbean sea" (qtd in Scott 106), or Fred Wah's idea of "[h]ow taste remembers life" (74). Diasporas are *not* the sort of communities whose sense of belonging is only imagined, nor do they subscribe to straightforward ideas of origins. Although diaspora theory sometimes "stammers" when it seeks to couple its theorizations of community with communal material practices, it nonetheless embraces the collectivities which emerge from something other than formal histories and nation-states.

While these theoretical approaches make possible my thinking in this dissertation, part of what has been most useful for me in thinking through this project is to understand the places where the Chinese restaurant does *not* fit, where it becomes a problem for postcolonial and diaspora theories. If, as I argue, we need to understand diasporas as related to the dislocating effects of colonialism and imperialism, then how can we use postcolonial theories of agency and resistance such as Ranajit Guha's thinking on rumour and Homi Bhabha's thinking on colonial panic to account for the acts of everyday resistance that are embedded in a Chinese restaurant menu in a small town in Canada? How do we understand the relationship between the historical dislocations of slavery and indenture, and the contemporary diasporas? The postcolonial critique makes visible the dependence of the Habermasian public sphere on slavery and colonialism and thus the structure of nostalgia at work in the public sphere itself. But how then do we differentiate the nostalgia of the diasporic subject and the public space of diaspora community? If we take seriously the warning against submitting to the lures of race and blood as bases for belonging, how do we read for the ties that bind diaspora communities? This dissertation is an extended conversation with postcolonial and diasporic theory which is grounded in the small town Chinese restaurant.

In Chapter One, I distinguish diasporic agency from postcolonial conceptions of agency through an exploration of two moments in the history of Chinese cooks serving food to non-Chinese consumers. The first moment is one of subaltern history. It occurs in Hong Kong, January, 1857, only months before the Sepoy Rebellion in India. From the colonial archive, we can read a story of poison, deception and ultimately, panic fueled by rumour that cannot be contained. I juxtapose this narrative with that of a different moment of culinary resistance, one which does not even have a place in the colonial archive, but circulates as a folk story, a tale told over *mah jong* tables of the *lo wah kiu*, old villagers in the new country. It is a story about the sour sweetness of agency in diaspora embedded on the contemporary restaurant menu. Put against each other, these two narratives suggest the importance of the relationship between the postcolonial and the diasporic, and some of the problems of reading for agency in the precariousness of migrancy.

Chapter Two attends to this problem of diasporic agency further through a reading of Chinese restaurant menus. From the 1923 menu of the New Dayton Café which offered no Chinese food at all to the contemporary menus of restaurants which contain the now famililar offerings of chop suey, chow mein and fried rice, these menus are texts which both define and critique the concepts of Chineseness and Canadianness. This chapter argues that shifting our understanding of diasporic arrival to include non-metropolitan settlement enables a conception of Chinese diasporic agency which is not only spatial, but also temporal. Within this reading of temporal resistance, this chapter also makes a connection between an alternative temporality and the work of memory.

Chapters Three and Four engage with the problem of diasporic spatiality enmeshed with the conceptions of alternative temporality in Chapter Two. Chapter Three examines the representation of the Chinese restaurant in two folk songs, Sylvia Tyson's "The Night the Chinese Restaurant Burned Down" and Joni Mitchell's "Chinese Café/ Unchained Melody." Although both songs refer to the restaurant as a disappearing or disappeared object, the chapter argues that this use of the restaurant as a site of loss signals a larger problem of nostalgia as *structural* to the public sphere. The chapter explores the ways in which the Chinese restaurant functions as a screen, in both senses of the word, for the un-named predication of the Habermasian public sphere on indenture and slavery. Chapter Four continues the discussion of the problem of space through a discussion of Gu Xiong and Andrew Hunter's visual art installation, Ding Ho/Group of 7, and Fred Wah and Haruko Okano's chapbooks, HIGH~~BRIDI~~TEA, and their re-working of the Diamond Grill menu. This chapter explores the incipient situatedness of diasporas and ways of reading their emplacement in places of "arrival."

Chapter Five takes up what David Scott calls "the demand of diaspora criticism" (127). I understand this demand as one which revolves around the problem of transmission, of attempting to grasp what it is that makes diasporic communities diasporic. What are the ties that bind? In the context of the black diaspora, Scott takes this demand to mean "that it neither wants the cultural nationalist dream of a full and homogenous 'blackness' nor the postmodern hope of an arbitrary, empty, and 'unscripted' one" (127). If it is not race, or nation, or even just the experience of displacement, what constitutes diasporic community? This chapter explores these questions through the poetry of Fred Wah and argues that a first step away from the bind of the oppositions of cultural nationalism on the one hand and deconstructed Chineseness on the other lies in stepping outside of the ensnarements of historicism. I suggest that the debate on the problem of Chineseness between cultural nationalists and deconstructionists remains within a historicist frame of reference and that this debate mirrors the split debate in literary criticism on Wah between form and content. Embracing the difficulties of Wah's text, I read for the ways in which Diamond Grill and Waiting for Saskatchewan put forward the notion of a transgenerational memory. I share with Scott a desire to locate an answer to the demand of diaspora criticism with a dehistoricized history and I read in Wah's poetry an assertion of this history outside of history.

One of the goals of this chapter, and of the dissertation overall, is that of situating the longing, sadness, hunger, and homesickness of what it means to be in diaspora. I do not mean to valorize the melancholic, or even to indulge in narratives of victimization and wounding. But I also do not want to write off diasporic melancholia as only naïve, misguided and therefore dangerous. Those in diaspora often know better than anyone else that there is no home to which they can return. And yet this knowledge does not make that homesickness any less legitimate. If the logic of the wound is that it must be cured in order for the wounded subject to move forward, then perhaps we need to question the basis of that logic and the presumption that melancholia is itself a sign of backwardness. Perhaps we need to embrace the coevality of sadness and pleasure in diaspora, the bittersweetness of being within communities of dislocation.

It is this bittersweetness which colours my sense of what it means to eat Chinese. One of my first memories of eating anything at all, and my first inkling of what it might mean to eat Chinese, came on a thick milky-white ceramic plate edged with dark green stripes. It's the kind of plate you still see in some Chinese restaurants, old diners, or amidst piles of second-hand dishes at thrift stores. They are sturdy and seem to last forever. The onion rings did not last long in front of my brother and me. They were hot and golden, crisp outside and still steamy in the middle. The back of my thighs, unprotected by summer shorts, stuck to the naughahyde of the booth. My legs dangled far above the linoleum floor. I remember these onion rings with a combination of deep pleasure and sadness hovering at the edges. I used to think onion rings were Chinese food because we were Chinese people and we ate Chinese food. Later, eating onion rings made by the same hands, hands that were even more deeply lined, more scarred and sad, all I could think was, Why did you come here? At one point in Diamond Grill, Fred Wah asks, "Why Trail of all places?" (DG 87). Why some place where we knew no one? When we had no job, no friends, not even a place to live?

Because of a rumour. "Because there was a rumour in Calgary that you could get a job in Trail" (Wah DG 87). Because there was a rumour of gold. Because there was a rumour of possibility. Because there was a rumour that it had to be better than what was here.

Let us begin then with rumour and eating Chinese food.

Chapter One

Sweet and Sour: Historical Presence and Diasporic Agency[1]

Sweet and sour pork is one thing in English. In Cantonese it tells a very different story. This chapter is a meditation on the significance of that difference. From the story of sweet and sour pork, from a tale of the culinary contact zone of Chinese workers on the Canadian railway and contemporary Chinese Canadian restaurant menus, I came to questions about the relationships among postcolonial studies, diaspora studies and the question of agency. This chapter is an attempt to register a difference within what has become in recent times a very heated debate over the question of postcolonial and diasporic agency. In many ways, diaspora studies is not quite distinct from postcolonial studies but emerges from it. However, current models of agency in postcolonial theory do not fully address the condition of migrancy. In prising a consideration of the diasporic subject apart from the postcolonial subject, I want to draw out the differences and the similarities between these two subjectivities. This chapter is concerned with one overall problem: How do you read for agency not just in the slenderness of historical narrative, but also in the precariousness of migrancy? The first part of the chapter will theorize the tenuous relationship between postcolonial and diasporic subjectivities and argues that diasporic subjects need to be considered in relation to the displacements of colonial violence. In the second part of the chapter, I invite you to sit down to two meals and three effects: consumption, expulsion and incorporation. In the meals consumed, I will look at continuance -- how the agency of the native and that of the migrant arrives at similar structures of effects. In the meal that is expelled, I will look at difference, how the condition of native agency differs from that of migrant agency. In the incorporation of the leftovers, the cool residuum of meals consumed and expelled, I will look at the historical trace of the inescapable articulation of the presence of those not at the table.

Theorizing the Postcolonial and the Diasporic: Differences and Affinities

In 1993 both Paul Gilroy's The Black Atlantic and Rey Chow's Writing Diaspora emerged. In 1994 James Clifford published his essay "Diasporas." The debate and discussion around diaspora has been bubbling with increasing prominence in the humanities for about a decade. None of the texts that I have noted are explicitly postcolonial. Their authors do not declare themselves to be postcolonial in any clear way and the writing does not necessarily concern itself with postcolonial studies. And yet, the lexicon of diaspora has become increasingly predominant in anglophone postcolonial studies.

Since the emergence of critical discussions of diasporas, there has been substantial overlap between diaspora discusssions and postcolonial ones. Khachig Tololyan notes in a footnote to his "Rethinking Diaspora(s)": "'Postcolonial' is an even more capacious and heterogeneous term and category at the moment than 'diasporic,' and the two are not synonymous. But many scholars of postcoloniality feel almost compelled to write about the diasporic, and vice versa" (n. 29). Chapter Seven of Leela Gandhi's Postcolonial Theory, "One World: the vision postnationalism," argues for an

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[1] A version of the first part of this chapter has beens submitted for publication in the

understanding of discourses of diaspora in conjunction with hybridity as an important future direction for postcolonial studies. Within this reading, Gandhi's hybridized diasporic subject becomes the inheritor of a postcolonial subjectivity which has advanced beyond simple cultural nationalism. Although Gandhi cautions against treating this vision of "one world" where the hybridized diasporic identities become the ideal future of postcolonial subjectivity, this analysis also seems to fall prey to the same "premature political amnesia" she cautions against (140). Vijay Mishra goes even further, suggesting that "[p]ostcolonial theory has drawn its source texts as well as its cultural dynamism from diasporic archives" and notes that postcolonialism's debt to diasporic texts is "obvious" in the work of Homi Bhabha (426, n23). Perhaps more than any other text, The Location of Culture merges the postcolonial with the diasporic. Throughout the book, Bhabha uses the diasporic subject interchangeably with the postcolonial one. Although the index of Bhabha's The Location of Culture does not have an entry for "diaspora," it is a concept that Bhabha persistently evokes throughout his text.[2] Throughout the book, Bhabha is concerned with migrancy and migrants. In the last half of the introduction Bhabha explores the "unhomeliness of migrancy": "To live in the unhomely world, to find its ambivalences and ambiguities enacted in the house of fiction, or its sundering and splitting performed in the work of art, is also to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity" (Bhabha 18). In a different register, theorizing resistance, Benita Parry notes that "identity is not perceived as multi-located and polysemic – a situation that characterizes postcoloniality and is at its most evident in the diasporic condition" (175).

"Diaspora" special issue of the Canadian Review of American Studies.

[2] Although this is not an exhaustive list, see for example p. 4-5, 13, 139, 164-165, 169-170, 172, 224-225.

In their introduction to Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat suggest that the essays in the anthology, "above all… represent an attempt at grappling with the meaning of location and belonging, of communities of interepretation and praxis, of home, in the increasingly diasporic panoramas of the contemporary world" (2). This mixing of postcolonial and diasporic subjectivities has been occurring for some time.

This slippage between postcolonial and diasporic subjectivity is a symptom of something more than just a categorical confusion. It is a symptom of postcolonialism's on-going concern with what Stuart Hall, echoing Ella Shohat, has marked as the productive tension of the "post" in postcolonialism (253). That is, the tension between a postcolonialism that is the study of the aftermath of colonialism, and one that focuses on going beyond colonialism in terms of a theoretical and epistemic shift. Within the productivity of this tension, the diasporic subject emerges. Thinking at postcolonialism's limit, in what Stuart Hall presciently notes as a process wherein the postcolonial is always under erasure, where its very undecidability must be read as the strength of its interventionary work, we arrive at the subjects of colonial displacement.

Postcolonialism's repeated turn to the diasporic subject is an expression of postcolonialism's desire to follow the subjects of colonialism's oppressive histories outside of the space of European colonialism and into the sphere of its aftermath. Some of postcolonialism's harshest critics have focused on the breadth of its embrace. It has been accused alternately of being its own colonizing force in terms of First World theoretical work mining the raw materials of Third World literature, of having no historical specificity, of being opaque and disconnected from true subjects of oppression, and too ambivalent about the terms of its own debate.[3] In some ways, postcolonialism could be seen as traveling too easily without the specificity of local referents. But it travels because it is concerned with following the subjects of colonial oppression after the ostensible end of that oppression both in the sense of the after and the going beyond. Postcolonialism travels into the space of diaspora because colonialism is a dislocating force.

The problem is not so much whether or not diasporic subjects are postcolonial or vice versa. Rather, it is the problem of how we think through oppressions which have trajectories beyond national borders and across historical time. Diaspora studies can mediate the gap between postcolonial studies and minority discourse work. In her article "Is the United States Postcolonial?" Jenny Sharpe notes that what has been called postcolonial in the United States actually falls more accurately under the category of minority discourse studies. Sharpe notes that the use of postcolonial to describe minority populations in the United States rose largely out of the Third World Movement of the 1960s where coalitions of black, Native American, Latino and Asian students structured their activist struggles after third world nationalist liberation models (183). However, Sharpe argues that the use of "postcolonial" as a descriptive term for racial exclusion carries within it the potential for masking both the role of the United States as a neo-colonial force as well as the displacement of a politics of race in the rush for recognition under liberal multicultural regimes. "The refashioning of postcolonial studies as a minority discourse has not only moved us far afield from the early objectives of colonial discourse analysis but also risks playing into a liberal multiculturalism that obfuscates the category of race" (Sharpe 185-186). Her observation points to a problem not only within U.S. postcolonial studies, but also to the critical desire for a way of thinking about oppression in a nation-state context which also recognizes that local oppressions are never simply locally generated but are connected to larger transnational networks of power.

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[3] These criticisms are most cogently argued in texts such as Aijaz Ahmad's In Theory and Arif Dirlik's "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capital."

For Avtar Brah, the problem of the gap between postcolonial and minority discourse for addressing the specificities of diasporic subjects is one of the differential relationality of racism. Situating her discussion of diaspora in Cartographies of Diaspora, Brah asks, "How, for instance, are African, Carribean, South Asian and white Muslims differentially constructed in present-day Britain? Similarly, how are blacks, Chicanos, Chinese, Japanese, or South Koreans in the USA differentiated within its racialised formations?" (185). Brah's discussion points to the importance of thinking of multiple groups in relation to one another *and* within a larger state formation.[4] Her thinking turns to a consideration of minority discourse theory, partly because it offers the possibility of thinking of a number of minorities precisely in relation to each other and within the state, but she ultimately reaches the limitations of the work of minority discourse. In what is perhaps one of the best critiques of minority discourse work, Brah points to the ways in which the minority discourse theory that began with JanMohammed and Lloyd's 1986 conference and subsequent writing on "The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse"[5] cannot dislodge "the more literal readings that the word minority tends to engender, as well as the related issue… [of] the association in classical liberal political theory of certain categories of 'minorities' with the status of being a 'minor in tutelage'" (188). Noting that the term "minority" continues to function as an "alibi for pathologised representations of [racialized groups]," Brah points to the absence of a major political movement which accompanied, for example, the Black Panther movement's successful bid to shift the connotations of the word "black" (188). "[G]iven the genealogy of signifying practices centred about the idea of 'minority'" Brah concludes, "the continuing use of the term is less likely to undermine than to reiterate this nexus of meanings" (188). It is at this point that Brah turns to diaspora as a concept that has the potential to dislodge the majority-minority axis at the same time that it positions collectivities within and against power. Although a consideration of the intersection of multiple diasporic groups is beyond the scope of my project, I share with Brah her sense of the urgency of thinking about diaspora as a concept which still retains its commitments to exploring the oppression of racialised collectivities at the same time that it recognizes that there are uneven relations between them. Exploring cultural contexts and contests under the rubric of diaspora takes up the problem where minority discourse ends and where postcolonial theory does not always fit. In the shadowy space of the passage, the diasporic negotiates the articulation of the unhomely.[6]

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[4] While diaspora critics such as Brah, Bhabha, Chow and Gilroy have not engaged with critical race theory specifically, their discussions of minority discourse theory (with the exception of Gilroy whose work does not refer specifically to either minority discourse or critical race theory) suggest a relationship to critical race theory through a concern for the articulation of race in confrontations with the state. Emerging mainly from U.S. legal scholars who challenged legal concepts which are foundational to the liberal state (for example, property rights, the subject of law, and equality before the law), critical race studies also engages with the relationship between racial minorities and the state. Perhaps the biggest difference between critical race theory and minority discourse lies in the relationality of the "minor" in minority discourse. Instead, critical race theory's focus on specific racial formations and their constitution in law can be seen as a more particular exploration of the relationship between racial minorities and the state. In that sense, the definitive work in critical race studies has been grounded in specific legal texts such as the U.S. constitution (such as Cheryl Harris' "Whiteness as Property" or Neil Gotanda's "A Critique of 'Our Constitution is Color-Blind'") or educational policies (such as Derrick Bell's "Brown vs. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma"). Critical race theory challenges state formations through a critique of the texts of the state.

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[5] See the essays in JanMohammed and Lloyd's volume The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse.

In the chapter titled "Against the Lures of Diaspora" in Writing Diaspora, Rey Chow gestures to the limits of minority discourse theory and postcolonial theory for Chinese diaspora intellectuals. For Chow, the lure of diaspora is the lure of occupying a space of self-exoticization at the expense of those who are the ostensible subjects of counter-hegemonic inquiries. It is important to remember that the subjects of Chow's diaspora are intellectuals in the western academy. However, her discussion does suggest one of the ways in which minority discourse theory presents a limit to thinking about Chinese diasporic subjectivity which postcolonial theory cannot address. Writing about the occlusion of Chinese women in modern Chinese literature, Chow suggests that, in the field of Chinese literary studies, the adoption of a "minor" position in relation to the west effectively works to further marginalize Chinese women because their minority status is always subsumed under a larger minority construction:

> If minority discourse is, like all discourse, not simply a fight for the content of oppression it is ostensibly about but also a fight for the ownership – the propriety,

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[6] Bhabha writes, "To be unhomely is not to be homeless" (9). Rather, "[t]he unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" (11). In this introductory salvo to the problem of postcolonial subjects who are haunted by the uncanny moment of the merging of the private and the public, Bhabha already illustrates the way in which postcolonial concerns attempt also to straddle and include the concerns of the diasporic. Thus, Toni Morrison's Beloved, a text which deals with the slave experience in the U.S, and Nadine Gordimer's My Son's Story, a text about the condition of being coloured in South Africa, become the exemplary texts of the unhomely condition.

> the property – of speaking (that is, for *zhengming*) then Chinese women are precluded from that ownership because it has always been assumed by others in the name of the people, the oppressed classes, and the nation. (Chow 111-112)[7]

Because of this occlusion, Chow suggests that Chinese intellectuals in the west must make transparent the privileged space of the articulation of their subjects and subjectivities. "While [intellectual Chinese women] do not lose sight of the oppression of women, these intellectuals should admit rather than repress the inequality inherent in discourse and the difference between them and their 'objects'" (Chow 114).

In the postscript to the chapter, neither her articulation of minority discourse theory, nor postcolonial theory sufficiently addresses the problem of representation with which Chow begins: "Why is it so difficult to bring up the topic of women in the field of Chinese studies?" (99). For Chow, this problem is the problem of the situation of Chinese intellectuals in the west as well as the problem of the limitations of postcolonial theory. Pointing to the experiences of peoples living in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, Chow notes that China "was never completely 'colonized' over a long period of time by any one foreign power, even though the cultural effects of imperialism are as strong as in other formerly colonized countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America" (118). Chow's situating of modern Chinese literature as both a postcolonial literature and an example of minority discourse only makes sense read within her definition of the minor as the victimized but actually highlights the gulf which separates the postcolonial and minority studies. She writes, "Because postcolonial literatures are linked to the hegemonic discourse of the West as such, they are… always effectively viewed as a kind of minority discourse whose existence has been victimized and whose articulation has been suppressed" (101). Postcolonial literatures are not minority discourses within the more common definition of minority discourse as the intersection of minority positions and their relation to a particular state, but Chow's suggestion of the overlaps between them points precisely to the enormous gap between the postcolonial and the minor which a rigorously defined theory of diaspora might address.

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[7] *Zhengming* is a Confucian concept which Chow defines as "the rectification of names" (104). See p. 104-106 for her discussion of the way in which *zhengming* demonstrates the what Chow notes as the absolute relationship between language and power in China.

Although Chow is preoccupied in this chapter with the responsibility of Chinese intellectuals abroad to those in China, this chapter also, incidentally foreshadowing the increased interest in diaspora studies to come, gestures to the gap in theorizing the politics of dislocation which diaspora studies can bridge. In between the space of minority discourse and the reach of postcolonial theory, diaspora studies can work to articulate the subjectivity, not of Chinese intellectuals stranded in the west after June 4, 1989, but of those who have been dislocated without access to precisely the powerful forms of articulation such as those available to intellectuals writing within the privileged spaces of the western academy. Chow's warning against diaspora is more precisely a warning against the desire of "third world" intellectuals in the west claiming minority positions while masking their own "hegemony… over those who are stuck at home" (118). However, if we shift our understanding of Chinese diasporic subjectivity away from that of Chinese intellectuals in the west and towards those who are stranded in the west with none of the privileges with which the intellectual arrives, the space of critical diaspora studies might be something to explore rather than avoid.

This project embraces the lures of diaspora but works on the premise that diasporic subjects are those who have been displaced by the effects of colonial oppression. This is not a preoccupation with victimhood. Rather, it is a recognition of the inescapable histories of traumatic dislocation from which modern diasporas have emerged. Colonialism and imperialism in their direct form[8] have been responsible for the vast majority of nineteenth- and twentieth- century displacements of peoples from the south to the north, the postcolony to the metropole. I acknowledge Stuart Hall's important observation about the kind of presumptuousness that lies at the heart of assuming that all diasporic trajectories are uni-directional: "The notion that only the multi-cultural cities of the First World are 'diaspora-ised' is a fantasy which can only be sustained by those who have never lived in the hybridised spaces of a Third World, so-called 'colonial,' city" (Hall 250). However, I want to dwell on the problem of diaspora as one of the gap which lies at the limit of postcolonial and minority discourse theory. Because the term diaspora must retain its resonances with the dislocations of oppression, we must untangle it from the concerns of transnational migrancy in general.

In a recent talk, Rinaldo Walcott suggested that we think of diasporic subjects as the "B" side of transnational migration where we would find elite voluntary transnational migrants on the "A" side.[9] While these populations are two sides of the same record, they also carry within them different repurcussions, rhythms and formations. Following from

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[8] In Postcolonialism Robert Young traces the history of the deployment of the idea of imperialism and differentiates imperialism in its direct form (conquest) from indirect forms such as political or economic influence which functions as an effective domination (27). Also, see p. 15-43 for an excellent discussion of the historical emergences of colonialism and imperialism and the distinction between the two.

Walcott's metaphor, I propose that we think of diasporic subjects as intimately related to the aftermath of colonialism. It is not that diaspora necessarily causally follows colonialism. Obviously, as works such as Robin Cohen's Global Diasporas show, the history of mass migration pre-dates the incursions of European colonialism.[10] However, the recent resurgence of the term diaspora in the western academy has arisen out of a profound perplexity around the cultural spaces and products of peoples who have been displaced by oppression and violence. If the term diaspora is to retain its potential as a space of powerful critique, it cannot float away from the constitutive sorrows of dislocation.

The term diaspora in contemporary discussion should be unequivocally reserved for those who have been displaced by the oppressions of colonialism and imperialism. In "Rethinking Diaspora(s)" Khachig Tololyan maintains some fears about the ways in which diaspora as a concept has become unhinged, in both enabling and disabling ways, from its classical usage. Warning of the dangers of allowing the term to become too expansive and inclusive, he suggests that, "[w]ithout some minimum stringency of definition, most of America – or Argentina, or New Zealand, or any modern immigrant-

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[9] Walcott spoke of this metaphor at a panel discussion on diaspora at the 2002 meeting of Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies at the University of Toronto.

[10] While Cohen's work is useful for illustrating what might be considered a basic "long" history of diasporic migrations, his diasporic typologies – classical, victim, trade, imperial, cultural and so on – in Global Diasporas are ontologically contradictory. After all, as he himself recognizes, these categories are not discreet or even adequately descriptive (Cohen xi). The Chinese diaspora might qualify as both a trade and a labour diaspora and all diasporas must be cultural at some level. Although Cohen suggests that the point of his categorization is to "provide prompts, models and guides," these typologies suggest a positivistic approach to diaspora which confuses the problem of defining diasporas with the problem of positively identifying them as objects of inquiry rather than subjects of displacement.

nation – would just as easily be a diaspora" (30). Of course, the need for a stringency of definition lies in the perils of a collapsing of transnational and diasporic subject where the use of the diasporic concept beyond its classical one may result in "the inadvertent complicity between some diasporicist and transnationalists in the attack on the nation-state" (29). Both Vijay Mishra and Gayatri Spivak share these concerns.[11] Tololyan's reservations about the proliferating use of the term diaspora could be quelled if we understand the traumas which are constitutive of contemporary diasporic populations as colonial ones. There are almost no mass displacements of peoples in the last two centuries which have not been triggered by colonialism.

Through a consideration of recent discussions of agency in Chinese diaspora studies, I argue that diaspora studies, as it emerges as a field of study in the academy, risks losing its critical potential without a clearly and rigorously theorized relationship to postcolonialism. Despite the fact that, as I have pointed out, diaspora studies in many ways emerged independent from postcolonial studies, diaspora studies risks devolving into a reification of existing power relations without a clear sense of its relation to postcolonialism.

Recent work on the topic of the Chinese diaspora illustrates some of the dangers of a disavowal of the work of postcolonial studies. The work of critics such as Constance Lever-Tracy and David Ip, Aihwa Ong, Donald Nonini and Lynn Pan have all in different ways argued for readings of Chinese diasporic agency based on the commercial successes of Chinese diasporic communities. Lever-Tracy and Ip argue that the small firms of the Chinese diaspora have led the world market in investment in mainland China through the use of familial networks and their ability to facilitate effective cross-cultural communication. Similarly, Lynn Pan's work in Sons of the Yellow Emperor repeats the relegation of poor Chinese migrants to the margins of the trimphalist narrative of Chinese migration relegating them to a historical period separate from the present. This is a move which allows for a forgetting of the significant numbers of poor and desperate Chinese people who still migrate every year. It is a move which attempts to keep the past of coolie migration firmly in the past – something which I will address at the end of this chapter and throughout the next – and emphasizes the commercial successes of contemporary Chinese migrants. And so, Pan can unproblematically note that "[m]iddle class Chinese immigrants were up against the fact that because the first Chinese to enter America had been labourers, in the ordering of minorities ethnic Chinese had been assigned a low place in American minds. It therefore became all the more important for the Chinese to dignify themselves with university degrees" and, ultimately, various forms of capital accumulation (277). While it is true that many Chinese migrants engage in and benefit from the narrative of ascendancy, this subscription to it has often come at the expense of dispensing with the migration of the poor and the dispossessed as unfortunately backward and non-modern.

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[11] See Mishra, "The diasporic imaginary" and Spivak, " Diasporas old and new."

With more theoretical sophistication, in Ungrounded Empires Ong and Nonini suggest a similar argument in the proposition of deterritorialized, flexible and highly mobile form of social organization. They argue for a consideration of Chinese transnationalism as an alternative modernity where "[t]he proliferation of different ways of being Chinese – through accumulation strategies, mobility, and modern mass media – has engendered complex, shifting, and fragmented subjectivities that are at once specific and yet global" (26). Aihwa Ong takes these ideas up further in Flexible Citizenship, arguing for a sustained reading of the agency inherent in these deterritorialized and highly flexible new subjectivities.

However, in each of the readings of agency, the success of Chinese diasporic subjects and the source of their agency is read in terms of global capitalism. Expressing his scepticism with particular reference to Ong's argument, James Clifford suggests that the agency of the Chinese investor's transnational diasporicism "[s]een in connection with exploitative, 'flexible' labour regimes in the new Asian and Pacific economies… may evoke a less positive response. The political and critical valence of diasporic subversions is never guaranteed" (257). Clifford's scepticism leads to my own reservations about the radical possibilities of Ong's analysis.

Because it has been the only major work in Chinese diaspora scholarship specifically devoted to "the agency of displaced subjects" (23), let me pause to consider Flexible Citizenship at more length. The main subject of Ong's analysis is the Chinese transnational subject for whom migration and relocation are "practices to strive for rather than stability" (19). The multiple passport holder who "is willing and eager to work with the Chinese-communist state while conjuring up ways of escape from potential dangers to his investment and family" is the exemplary figure of flexible citizenship. It is the cultural logic of his displacement which drives the reading for agency in the book. Within her analysis, Ong specifically rejects postcolonialism as a critical tool. As with so many critiques, Ong's dismissal of postcolonialism is particularly persuasive because it is half-right. Although this is now a familiar argument that has already been levelled at postcolonialism by a number of critics, she is partially right in her critique of postcolonialism as historically homogenizing. Citing Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, Ong is also very apt in her suggestion that for "these cultural theorists… postcolonialism refers primarily to the ways colonialism has shaped contemporary minority-identity politics and the critique of Western societies" (33). This is the point that Jenny Sharpe has also made. However, Ong is wrong to suggest that a focus on the effects of colonialism is outdated. She argues that

> we must move beyond an analysis based on colonial nostalgia or colonial legacies to appreciate how economic and ideological modes of domination have been transformed in excolonial countries, as well as how those countries' positioning in relation to the global political economy has also been transformed. (35)

The suggestion that we must move beyond the rut of colonialism's legacy denies the strength of that legacy as a historical, cultural and economic form of oppression. As the recent work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argues, colonialism is intimately linked to the emergence of global capitalism. Hardt and Negri argue that the current emergence of global capitalism is a formation which they have identified as Empire, "a *decentered* and *deterritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, exanding frontiers" (xii). Their genealogy of Empire begins with European imperialism and moves towards Euro-American imperialism. Similarly, Robert Young's historical introduction to postcolonialism argues that postcolonial studies is necessarily concerned with the intrusion of the past of colonialism into the present of continuing oppressions. "The postcolonial does not privilege the colonial. It is concerned with colonial history only to the extent that that history has determined the configurations and power structures of the present, to the extent that the anti-colonial liberation movements remain the source and inspiration of its politics" (Young 4). Rather than being in opposition to postcolonial legacies, Ong's alternative temporalities are deeply embedded within the legacy of the postcolonial if only in that the ascendancy of the transnational investor's power within global capitalism cannot be separated from global capital's debt to colonialism and imperialism.

Ong argues that the "'alternative' in alternative temporalities does not necessarily suggest a critique of, or opposition to, capital" (35). Instead, she notes that many of the so-called Asian tiger countries would consider themselves as "post postcolonial," a condition that she defines as "characterized by state developmental strategies, rising standards of living, and the regulation of populations in a post-cold war order of flexible capitalism" (35). She is correct in noting that many formerly colonized countries in Southeast Asia are themselves now deeply involved in "colonizing" neighbouring countries. And yet, surely, this repetition of colonial tactics of domination should be a call to think through the legacy of colonialism rather than a basis for its dismissal.

Not only does the work of Ong, Nonini, Pan, Lever-Tracy and Ip focus on the practices of elite transnationals under the name of diasporic cultural formations risk overlooking or misreading the agency of the non-elite, this overwhelming focus in what is emerging as the primary body of Chinese diaspora scholarship also risks re-enacting and resurrecting its own hegemony. It keeps those in the margins at the margins rather than engaging in the difficult work of reading for agency from below. More than that, it glorifies mobility at the expense of recognizing the precariousness of migrancy.

Reading for agency in the precariousness of migrancy, I want to highlight the ways in which the state of migrancy is framed by social and political precariousness. It is not that all migrants exist in a precarious state but that migrancy carries within it the potential for precariousness. This is a precariousness marked by race, gender and class. What stands out for me in this marking though is the way in which the words "Go home" carry specific valences for some communities more than it does for others. For some, the injunction to go home carries with it a profoundly different capacity for pain, humiliation and political disempowerment than others. In the context of the Chinese diaspora, I am focussing on a diaspora marked most explicitly by race but inescapably defined by issues of sexuality, class and gender. However, this project focuses on the racialized diaspora because the Chinese diaspora has been defined throughout the social and historical archive by race first. As the history of race riots and race-based legislation such as the Head Tax and the Exclusion Act illustrates, the Chinese Canadian community has been attacked primarily on the basis of its Chineseness even though issues of sexuality, class and gender – especially evident in the promulgation of the idea of a degenerate bachelor society which has taken jobs away from upstanding and hardworking white men – are crucially imbricated in the targetting of Chinese immigrants.[12] Writing of the way in which racism perpetuates the exclusivism of racialized diasporic communities, Vijay Mishra notes in "The diasporic imaginary" that "[a]s long as there is a fascist fringe always willing to find racial scapegoats for the nation's own shortcomings and to chant 'Go home', the autochthonous pressures towards diasporic racial exclusivism will remain" (426). Mishra describes the sense of "familiar temporariness" which marks what he has called the old Indian diaspora, the diasporic community which is the legacy of indentured labour in the West Indies ("The diasporic imaginary" 426). In this idea of a familiar temporariness we can begin to read for the kind of precariousness which lies within racially marked diasporic communities. A fourth or fifth generation Chinese Canadian might still be asked to "go home" in a way that the fourth or fifth generation white Canadian will never be.

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[12] There have been a series of race riots targetted against Chinese immigrants in Canadian history, including the 1907 Vancouver riot which caused enough concern at both a local and a national level that Wilfred Laurier, the prime minister at the time, stepped in to police the situation. For detailed discussions of anti-Chinese riots and anti-Chinese legislation (the two often went hand in hand) see Peter Li's The Chinese in Canada, Patricia Roy's A White Man's Province, Peter Ward's White Canada Forever, and Edgar Wickberg's From China to Canada.

In the rest of this chapter, I set out the beginnings of a reading for agency where success is measured not so much in capital accumulation but in the challenges posed to colonialism. Rather than reading for agency within the terms of success defined by contemporary global capitalism, Chinese diaspora studies needs to read for resistances which upset the colonial order and its legacy. A study of the Chinese diaspora with a more rigorous assessment of the relationships among colonialism, postcolonialism and the diasporic community foregrounds the history of diasporic trajectories and, remembering this trajectory, a way of reading for the agency of the dispossessed in dislocation.

As a brief history of migration in the case of the Chinese diaspora community in Canada shows, emigration to Canada is marked by the effects of European colonialism as well as relations with Japan and Russia, most significantly due to the Opium Wars and the series of unequal treaties which China was forced to sign as a result of the wars. Between 1838 and 1900, China was in unequal trading relations with Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Japan, the U.S., Italy and Russia. The penetration of foreign capitalism undermined China's own economic integrity and accelerated its breakdown.

The combination of enormous taxation pressures brought about by the unequal treaties, poor harvest yields and an increase in population led to a number of rebellions in China including the Taiping Rebellion which lasted from 1850 to 1864 and the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. These instabilities and hardships were, at least in part, triggered by colonialism. On top of this, Canada's desperate shortage of cheap labour led to an indenture system which was responsible for the vast majority of Chinese immigration to Canada in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.[13] Of course, Canada was not the only destination for Chinese indentured labourers. Slavery was abolished and banned in British colonies in 1834. As a result, indenture was the next solution to labour shortages in the British empire. We have to remember that at the same time that the ship Carribean landed in Victoria with three hundred contract Chinese labourers in 1858, ships also crossed the Pacific and the Atlantic carrying Chinese indenture labour (and Indian indenture labour) to sugar plantations in the West Indies, railroad work all along the whole western coast of both the Americas, farms in Australia, and mines in South Africa.[14]

The history of Chinese diasporic trajectories is intimately linked to the history of colonialism. As Jenny Sharpe notes "[t]he designation of postcolonial as an umbrella term for diaspora and minority communities is derived in part from an understanding of decolonization as the beginning of an unprecedented migration from the former colonies to advanced industrialist centers" (105). However, as the trajectory of Chinese indenture labour shows, diaspora begins not only with the end of colonialism but also with its instigation. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries marked the mass exodus of dispossessed communities who were bound by indenture.

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[13] See Peter Li's The Chinese in Canada and Edgar Wickberg's From China to Canada for excellent historical surveys of some of the "push" and "pull" factors which mark early-nineteenth- and late-twentieth-century Chinese emigration to Canada.

[14] For detailed discussions of the trajectories and histories of Chinese indentured labour, see Indentured Labour, Carribean Sugar by Walter Look Lai, Plantation Workers: resistance and accommodation by Brij Lal, Doug Munro and Edward Beechart, and Indentured Labour in the British Empire by Kay Saunders.

In "Diasporas Old and New" Gayatri Spivak argues that we need to continue to be vigilantly attentive to the old diasporas of indenture and slavery and seek out their connections with contemporary diasporas of the dispossesed rather than simply celebrate the achievements of the new diasporas of savvy transnational capitalists. As Robert Young notes, postcolonialism has always been concerned with the relationship between the past and the present of oppression. "Interest in oppression of the past will always be guided by the relation of that history to the present" (Young 11). As I will discuss later in the chapter, the past always intrudes upon the present. Seperating the old from the new is not only a matter of the futility of forgetting, but also a denial of the constitutive effects of colonial traumas. As Rinaldo Walcott's metaphor suggests, the elite Chinese transnational with his multiple passports and the Chinese railroad coolie are two sides of the same album. Let us flip the album then, and listen for the resonances of the other side of transnational migration. Closer attention to the effects of colonialism as the primary locus of diasporic emigration precludes Chinese diaspora studies from straying into analyses that risk reifying existing power relations rather than challenging them.

While current Chinese diaspora scholarship has successfully traced the accomplishments of the transnational elite, for the diasporic non-elite, postcolonial scholarship helps to set out the beginnings for reading for agency from below. Of course, postcolonial models of agency cannot fully address the problems of reading for diasporic agency. Reading two agential scenes – one in 1857 Hong Kong and another on the contemporary Chinese Canadian restaurant menu – I will draw out some of the similarities and differences in reading for agency in the diaspora as opposed to reading for agency under colonialism.

In my consideration of a postcolonial model of agency, I draw largely from the work of the subaltern studies group because they articulate an understanding of agency which is not based in the individual, autonomous subject of history. Instead, they propose the possibility of thinking about agency across collectivities. Ranajit Guha's discussion of rumour and the circulation of the chapati in 1857 Meerut, the belief in Thakur during the Santal Rebellion of 1855, and Dipesh Chakrabarty's insistence upon the existence of precapitalist working-class consciousness in the jute mills of colonial India all suggest models of agency that do not depend upon single agents of history.[15] As Gayatri Spivak notes in "Deconstructing Historiography," "[s]ubaltern consciousness as emergent *collective* consciousness is one of the main themes of" the work of the Subaltern Studies group.

I understand this collectivity within Spivak's contention that the group's assertion of subaltern consciousness is a *strategic* one: "[A]lthough the group does not wittingly engage with the post-structuralist understanding of 'consciousness,' our own transactional reading of them is enhanced if we see them as *strategically* adhering to the essentialist notion of consciousness" ("Deconstructing" 15). Spivak's deconstruction "of the opposition between the [Subaltern Studies] collective and their object of investigation – the subaltern – on the one hand; and… the seeming continuity between them and their anti-humanist models on the other" ("Deconstructing" 20), enables an understanding of subaltern collectivity which is not simply the work of restoring subaltern subjectivity. I will take up Spivak's deconstruction with particular attention to her discussion of rumour later in this chapter.

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[15] Please see Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in particular p. 78-84; Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency, in particular p. 251-277; and Chakrabarty, "Conditions for Knowledge of Working-Class Conditions," in particular p. 225-230.

Unlike in colonial India, in diaspora, there are not always rebellions or other large, identifiable acts of resistance to which we can point. Part of the work of this chapter is to explore the possibilities of collective forms of agency within small acts, those acts which may have quietly become a part of our everyday while still retaining the traces of oppositionality. Robin Kelley's work on reading black resistance on public transit in post-World War Two Birmingham, Alabama, offers one way of reading for agency within the everyday. Noting that most black working-class resistance "has remained unorganized, clandestine and evasive," Kelley suggests that "examples of black working-class resistance in public spaces offer some of the richest insights into how race, gender, class, space, time and collective memory shape both domination and resistance" (56). Kelley examines a range of tactics, from using the bus as a "moving theatre" (72), to blaming the "unreliability of public transportation" as "a plausible excuse for absenteeism, for stealing a few extra hours of sleep, for attending to problems or running errands – all of which were standard resistance strategies, or purely strategies for making ends meet, waged by household workers" (70). This attention to the small resistances which take place in public spaces suggests one way of reading for agency in diaspora.

The public space of the small town Chinese restaurant opens up the possibilities of resistances which may not have a record in the colonial or settler colonial archive, but which are nevertheless present. While I will write at more length specifically about the

Chinese restaurant as a public space in Chapters Three and Four, what follows illustrates and sets up the problem of reading for diasporic agency through an exploration of two instances of resistances which emerge in food and the public serving of food. It is time that the railroad coolie emerge from the historical stereotype as a silent and unresisting immigrant. What does resistance look like in the precariousness of migrancy? Only with a sustained and rigorous commitment to those who have never been among the cosmopolitan transnationals of late modernity, can Chinese diaspora studies fully occupy the space of critique.

Let me turn then to the first meal: Hong Kong, 1857.

At the time, many Hong Kong Europeans bought fresh bread daily from the E Sing Bakery belonging to a Chinese man, Cheong Ah Lum. On January 15, 1857, large numbers of that European community became violently ill. The colonial police were called in; the investigation was immediate; and it was soon discovered that the cause of the January 15th illness was this: arsenic in the morning loaves. Fortunately, for the colonialists, the arsenic had been added to the loaves in such large quantities that most of the poisoned Europeans vomited at once and thus ejected most of the poison from their system. Although Ah Lum, the owner of the bakery, had left that same morning to Macau with his family, they soon tracked him down. At the trial, he claimed to have known nothing of the incident and that his own family had also been violently ill that day. The real crisis begins when Ah Lum is acquitted at the trial. Fifty-two of his workers were jailed and ten were tried. It was eventually decided that the Chinese government in Canton probably incited the poisoning. But no proof was ever found. Mass arrests followed the poisoning and thousands of Chinese were deported. Ultimately, 26 000 Chinese left Hong Kong that year.[16]

In the Ah Lum affair, as it came to be known, we are confronted with a colonial dynamic where anti-colonial political agency is, at best, dispersed. There is a massive overdetermination and we can read through the moment where history itself produces the vexing problem of an obvious occasion of criminality where there is no clear single agent. Fifty-two workers were arrested. Ten were tried. But Ah Lum himself, the man whose name becomes synonymous with the entire incident, was acquitted. And there were no answers. Despite the attempts of the colonial government to bring justice to the colony, the discourse of rumour and panic amplified the incident; very quickly, the poisoning moved beyond Ah Lum, beyond the fifty-two incarcerated workers, beyond ten convicted felons: it amounted to mass arrests and mass deportations. The Ah Lum affair touched the skittish nerve of the British community.

In the introduction to Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India, Ranajit Guha offers a way of reading for peasant insurgency despite the paucity of non-elite, non-colonial primary historical materials. Examining colonial documents, Guha suggests that the colonial archive betrays itself. In the uncertainty, the gaps of that archive, there is the possibility of reading for a peasant rebel consciousness.

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[16] This a brief summary of the poisoning. Accounts of the event appear in a number of histories of Hong Kong, including Nigel Cameron's Hong Kong: The Cultured Pearl and G.B. Endacott's A History of Hong Kong (44-60, 93-94). In popular history, the story has been re-told by Jan Morris in Hong Kong (52). Each of these accounts names Cheong Ah Lum as the principal perpetrator. The most thorough account of the specifics of Ah Lum's trial can be found in James William Norton-Kyshe's 1898 The History of the Laws and Courts of Hong Kong.

> For counter-insurgency, which derives directly from insurgency and is determined by the latter in all that is essential to its form and articulation, can hardly afford a discourse that is not fully and compulsively involved with the rebel and his activities. It is of course true that the reports, despatches, minutes, judgments, laws, letters, etc. in which policemen, soldiers, bureaucrats, landlords, usurers and others hostile to insurgency register their sentiments, amount to a representation of their will. But these documents do not get their content from that will alone, for the latter is predicated on another will – that of the insurgent. (Guha 15)

In the spirit of Guha's project, we can read in the colonial archive of the letters, despatches and laws for the history of anti-British Chinese insurgency. From the textual archive of the Hong Kong Colonial Office emerges the gaps that reveal the surfacing of an anti-colonial Chinese project.

Sir John Bowring, then Governor of Hong Kong, communicated the news of the poisoning to Her Majesty's Government in Britain in a letter that is itself a performance of a futile attempt to contain the fear and panic which gripped the colony. Writing on the morning of the poisoning, Bowring details the increase of various security measures and begs twice "to impress [upon] Her Majesty's Government the urgent necessity of sending at once, from India if possible, a Force of not less than 5000 men" (Hong Kong Public Records Office CO. 129-62, 95). The letter begins with references to a series of previous despatches of previous ordinances concerning the security of the colony. Bowring refers only ambiguously to the poisoning: "I now forward copies of four Government modifications, issued in connection with that Ordinance and *the existing condition of things*" (PRO CO. 129-62, 93, my emphasis). Bowring's letter attempts to maintain the formality of official correspondence. It outlines the official response to the crisis in the form of the actions they have taken: the appointment of a new assistant to the Superintendent of Police; the increase of the police force itself by one hundred men, fifty English and fifty Indian; the hiring of a merchant steamer to patrol the waters in the bays and creeks surrounding Hong Kong until English gun boats arrive. Bowring only gestures to the poisoning. His letter suppresses the news of the poisoning until it explodes at the end of the letter into a full out admission of panic. It is not until close to the end of the letter that Bowring describes the events that lead to these new security measures:

> Incendiarism was the only subject of our apprehension till this morning when a diabolical attempt was made to poison the foreign community by putting arsenic in the bread supplied by the Esing [sic] Bakery and largely used in the town. The principal, one Alum is said to have absconded to Macao, and I have this instant written to the Governor of that Settlement desiring assistance in his apprehension (PRO CO. 129-62, 94).

After detailing the news of the poisoning itself, Bowring closes the letter with his second entreaty for military reinforcement and declares that "[t]hese may be necessary for the defence of the Colony, and certainly are for the assertion of our Treaty Rights, the security of our Trade, and the very maintenance of our position in China" (PRO CO. 129-62, 95). It is finally only in the postscript that Bowring permits himself the admission of a moment of personal panic. Scrawled at the end of the letter, Bowring adds: "PS I beg to apologize if anything should have been forgotten at this last moment – I am shaken by the effects of poison, every member of my family being at this moment suffering from this new attempt upon our lives" (PRO CO. 129-62, 94). Only after five pages of official reporting does Bowring finally arrive at an explanation for the actions he has taken. His attempt to suppress his emotional anxiety only re-surfaces all the more powerfully in the postscript – the attempt to script the poisoning after the fact of its occurrence.

In "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," Guha notes that there is a quality of raw, instantaneousness which accompanies primary historical documents written first-hand by those who had the most to fear from it. It is a quality that is suppressed, contained and controlled in secondary and tertiary historical treatments. In the case of Bowring's first letter reporting the poisoning, Bowring's own attempt to suppress the rawness of his fear makes the tenor of his panic all the more vociferous.

In the panic of Hong Kong January 1857, I cannot help but hear the echo of Meerut, May, 1857, the beginning of the so-called Indian Mutiny or Sepoy Rebellion. Word had reached the British that chapatis were being passed, from hand to hand, in the villages surrounded by the British military cantonments. Homi Bhabha's article, "By Bread Alone," suggests that we might read the agency of the chapati not in the ambiguity of the content of the message embedded in the chapati, but rather in the productivity of rumor, the contagion of panic. Moreover, the chapati frustrates the colonial desire for a single agent of history. Bhabha's conclusion is in part that the power of the chapati narrative lies precisely in the failure of colonial authority to pin it down to a single agent, to secure it by naming it.

Even when colonial authority has named its agent, it still cannot secure it. One of the problems for colonial authority which emerges throughout the archive lies in the simple problem of finding a name for the man they had deemed to be guilty of the poisoning. Ah Lum's name is spelled differently in almost every letter, ranging from

Alum to Allum to Ah Lum and so on.[17] There is no stability to his identity from a colonial referent point. In that first report of the poisoning, Bowring's letter reveals its anxieties around the problem of naming in the marginalia. In his naming of Ah Lum as the primary culprit, Bowring admits his own ignorance of the baker's identity. Next to the sentence "The principal, one Alum [sic] is said to have absconded to Macao" Bowring writes in the margin, "*merely a mythical name*" (PRO CO. 129-62, 94 my emphasis). In the margins of colonial correspondence, Ah Lum begins to occupy the space of myth. Not only is his identity unfixable in the language of the colonial, but, despite the colonial desire for a single agent, Ah Lum's identity emerges into something larger. Despite Bowring's desire to fix Ah Lum as the principal perpetrator, his own marginalia transports Ah Lum into the larger collective space of myth.

The naming of the entire affair also reveals the way in which Ah Lum came to stand in for something larger than himself. The bakery poisoning in Hong Kong 1857 became known in the English-language newspapers in Hong Kong at the time as the Ah Lum Affair. In other words, the man who was deemed by the British court to be innocent of any knowledge of the poisoning nevertheless became synonymous with the poisoning. Why, in the popular colonial imaginary, did the event not become known as the E Sing Affair? How is it that Cheong Ah Lum comes to occupy a central place in the incident? Subsequent events suggest one answer. Taking the indignation of the English community upon himself, William Tarrant, the editor of one of the major papers at the time, the *Friend of China and Hong Kong Gazette*, sued Cheong Ah Lum for damages. Tarrant was awarded $1010[18] but Ah Lum left the colony before he could collect. In other words, the judgment of the colonial court failed to converge with a decision that the English community had already made: that Ah Lum was the central agent in the poisoning. Tarrant's actions articulate the lingering accusation, the persistent desire for identifying, securing and incarcerating a single agent. The naming of the affair exposes the colonial authorial desire for a single agent of history.

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[17] In The Potlatch Papers Christopher Bracken makes a similar point regarding the multiple spellings of the "potlatch" in the settler colonial archive.

Long before Tarrant's actions, the Hong Kong Attorney General's letter to the Colonial Secretary already exposes the failings of colonial governance. In a letter dated 20 January, 1857, only five days after the poisoning, the Attorney General's letter reveals the fissures that had begun to emerge within the colonial bureaucracy itself; T. Chisholm Anstey, then Attorney General, writes to W. T. Mercer, the Colonial Secretary:

> At a private conversation with His Excellency to which I understood myself to be invited, I had also this morning informed him that since last evening I have had cause to apprehend a failure of justice in the event of the poisoners being tried in the Criminal Court. The common jurors of Hong Kong are not generally men of affluent circumstances, and it is believed that most of the houses of business are in debt to their own Compradors or Shroffs. These latter again are

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[18] The main currency at this time was the silver dollar. The problem of currency has been a constant element of doing business in Hong Kong where transactions were often transnational. Endacott notes that a May 1845 proclamation set a number of coins as legal tender in addition to sterling and British coins: "the East India Company's gold mohur at 29s. and 2d.; the rupee at 1s. 10d. and the half, quarter and one-eighth rupees, pro rata; the dollar of Spain, Mexico and any South American state at 4s. 2d. and the Chinese copper cash at 288 for one shilling" (76-77). These equivalents remained in force until the growth of trade and forgery prompted then governor Sir Hercules Robinson to insist on a series of new coins for Hong Kong and the declaration of silver Spanish, Mexican and South American dollars to be legal tender in the colony (Endacott 117). The use of

> strongly of the party, or under the influence of the miscreant Allum [sic], a man of wealth and, of course, a moneylender. Placards having been posted everywhere calling his friends to his assistance, the Compradors and Shroffs have generally responded to the call, and they are going about to the European houses asserting violently his innocence, and the duty of the Court to set him free. One European so influenced may defeat the course of justice by simply becoming a juror, should chance so determine.
>
> I simply informed His Excellency: I did not advise him: I continued of the opinion expressed in my letter of Sunday last the 18th instant that it was not for me to advise whether a Court Martial should be appointed to try cases of this kind during the present crisis: eminently desirable as many think it, and much as the general enforcement of Martial Law is unquestionably required.
>
> I shall however obey His Excellency's desire that no information be laid before him that is not reduced to writing and addressed to the Colonial Secretary; although I cannot help fearing that the present awful crisis will not be best provided for by a general adherence to His Excellency's wishes in that respect, on the part of persons, like myself, who are anxious not to lose time in communicating the intelligence of the hour. (PRO CO. 129, 112-114)

While Bowring and Mercer held to the importance of considered administration of justice, missives such as Anstey's reveal the shortcomings of adhering to process and protocol. The urgency of Anstey's letter and his impatience with the Colonial Secretary's

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these particular currencies makes an interesting comment on early Pacific Rim trade and the intersection between British and Spanish imperial interests.

insistence upon due process exposes the colony's own lack of faith in the process of colonial governance in a moment of crisis.

For the Attorney-General, the miscarriage of justice was preferable to an appearance of governmental weakness. Anstey felt that Ah Lum's acquittal would not only cause a lack of faith among the colonial community but would also produce contempt in the Chinese community. As Norton-Kyshe notes, Anstey regretted that the case ever went to trial at all because he was fully aware of the inadequacy of the evidence against Ah Lum. To the jurors, Anstey said,

> We have rather hastily apprehended these men; we found no evidence that would have justified a Magistrate to commit them, so we manage to waive that process; and now that we have rather forced a trial, you must give us a conviction to save our character. *Better to hang the wrong men than confess that British sagacity and activity have failed to discover the real criminals.* (qtd. in Norton-Kyshe 417, my emphasis)

The Attorney-General's fears pushed the alibi of empire to its limit. The resulting five to one majority vote acquitting Ah Lum becomes a testimony to both a faith in the power of colonial governance on the part of the jurors, and failure of that colonial governance as an expression of the popular colonial belief that Ah Lum really was the culprit.

Anstey's letter also divulges a kind of second level of poisoning. The average jurors of Hong Kong, he notes, are generally compromised by their debts to Chinese merchants. "One European so influenced may defeat the course of justice by simply becoming a juror, should chance so determine"(PRO CO. 129, 114). Only one compromised juror, Anstey suggests, poisoned by his relationship to the moneylenders of the colony, could annul the entire judicial process. Of course, what is so offensive about Ah Lum is not just that he may own a bakery which had, until that point, supplied all of the bread for the colony, but that he was also a Shroff. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a Shroff as "[a] banker or money-changer in the East; in the Far East, a native expert employed to detect bad coin." In other words, according to Anstey, Ah Lum is also a principal in the economy of the counterfeit. Not only are members of the colony indebted to him and to his friends for capital, but also for the entire process of the *exchange* of capital. Moreover, trade in the colony is not only an exercise in capitalist exchange, but also exchange in translation. Colonial traders depended upon local intelligence to differentiate between good and bad coin, real and counterfeit currency. The very notion of shroffing depends upon and implies the pre-existence of an economy of the counterfeit, a place where distrust, suspicion and anxiety already run rampant. In this sense, Ah Lum's culpability lies not only in the possibility of his role in the bread poisoning, but also in the way his actions expose the weaknesses of trade in the colony and the dependence of the British upon those whom they colonize. This dependency has poisoned the judicial process before it was ever put into action against Ah Lum.

The Ah Lum affair epitomizes the failure of languages of colonial management. At the moment when Ah Lum, the perceived principal actor in the incident, was acquitted, when no clear enemy could be established, the whispers of conspiracy and insurgency became rampant shouts of alarm. If the alibi of empire is the rule of law,[19] the

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[19] When the British colonial government officially claimed Hong Kong, it dealt with the existing population of about 5000 Chinese inhabitants of the island by declaring them to be subjects of the Queen of England. On February 1, 1841, Captain Elliot issued the following proclamation:

TO THE CHINESE INHABITANTS OF HONG KONG

Ah Lum affair exposed its paucity. If the British traders justified their presence on the island because of the enlightened juridical and legal management they brought to it, then the failure of this colonial management in the face of an unmanageable inscrutability represents a moment of the failure of empire.

Here we come to the course of expulsion. Could the colonial administration of Hong Kong deport someone, thousands of people, on the suspicion of criminality which cannot be proven? More specifically, can they deport thousands of people on a suspicion of criminality which has no other grounding than that of race?[20] In the quasi-juridical

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PROCLAMATION

> Bremer, Commander-in-Chief, and Elliot, Plenipotentiary, etc., etc., by this proclamation make known to the inhabitants of the island of Hongkong, that that island has now become part of the dominions of the Queen of England by clear public agreement between the High Offices of the Celestial and British Courts; and all native persons residing therein must understand that they are now subjects of the Queen of England, and to whom and to whose officers they must pay duty and obedience.
>
> The inhabitants are hereby promised protection, in Her Majesty's gracious name, against all enemies whatever; and they are further secured in the free exercise of their religious rites, ceremonies, and social customs, and in the enjoyment of their lawful private property and interests. They will be governed, pending Her Majesty's further pleasure, according to the laws customs and usages of the Chinese (every description of torture excepted) and by elders of villages, subject to the control of a British magistrate; and any person, having complaint to prefer of ill-usage or injustice against any Englishman or foreigner, will quietly make report to the nearest officer, to the end that full justice may be done. Chinese ships and merchants, resorting to the port of Hong Kong for the purposes of trade, are hereby exempted, in the name of the Queen of England, from charge or duty of any kind to the British government. The pleasure of the government will be declared from time to time by further proclamation: and all heads of villages are held responsible that the commands are duly respected and observed. (qtd. in Norton-Kyshe 5-6)

The proclamation is in itself a rich text for the study of colonial rhetoric. The language of justice, protection and fairness recurs throughout this foundational text of colonial administration. See also David Spurr's The Rhetoric of Empire.

[20] From the beginning, the Hong Kong legal system differentiated its subjects on the basis of race. The problem of finding an appropriate legal system of governance for the colony haunted the Hong Kong administrators for decades. As the proclamation declaring

response to the Ah Lum affair, we can see the beginnings of a discursive moment of criminal typing which begins with containment and ends with expulsion. This is the trajectory of the colonial response to the poisoning -- deploying a notion of agency in its singularity in an attempt to arrest the rampant rumour of insurgency and the contagion of panic.

Like the chapati, the bread from the E Sing bakery transforms an old and familiar symbol into a performative sign of conspiracy and insurgency; the bread of the E Sing bakery circulates as the sign of contagion, conspiracy and violence:

> The semiotic condition of uncertainty and panic is generated when an old and familiar symbol (chapati) develops an unfamiliar social significance as sign through a transformation of the temporality of its representation. The performative time of the chapati's signification, its circulation as "conspiracy" and/or "insurgency", turns from the customary and commonplace to the archaic, awesome, terrifying. (Bhabha 202)

The colonial archive of the bread poisoning reveals yet another occasion of an attempt to return this sign of violence and conspiracy to the register of the familiar and sensible. The chemist's report on the poisoned bread attempts to re-situate the terrifying sign of the

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Chinese inhabitants to be subjects of the Queen of England makes clear, Hong Kong began with a dual system – British settlers would be governed by English law and Chinese inhabitants would be governed by Chinese law. However, despite a number of subsequent ordinances, there were still a number of problems with this system. As Endacott notes, "[t]he official attitude towards the Chinese was liberal enough in theory, but much of the legislation providing for law and order discriminated against them" (70). Endacott's discussion of early Hong Kong governance, particularly under Sir John Davies, highlights many of the problems that the colonial administration encountered in their attempts to apply English law in the colony. Peter Wesley-Smith's chapter "Statutory Provisions Importing English Law" in The Sources of Hong Kong Law discusses these issues in some depth.

poisoned bread into a narrative of the rational. The chemist of the War Department, F.A. Abel, examined four specimens of bread and found the following : that "[e]ach of the specimens of bread was found to contain arsenic, which was proved to have been introduced in the form of arsenious acid (white acid of commerce)" (PRO CO 129, 285). After a breakdown of the amount of arsenic found in each specimen, the chemist concludes the following: "It may be observed that the quantity of arsenious acid contained in four ounces of the specimen of toast (no. 1) about 2 1/2 grains has frequently been known to produce death when taken into the system" (PRO CO 129, 285). But an entire colonial community, including Bowring's wife and family, consumed this same bread and no one was killed. The result of the poisoning contradicts the chemist's own analysis. He fails to mention in his report that this may have actually been a case of excess, of too much poison to kill. Abel's scientific conclusion suggests an over-reaching or overwhelming desire to name guilt and culpability despite the contradictions of the evidence at hand.

Although the chapati and the white bread of E Sing may not be historically contiguous, Bhabha's work offers a way of reading postcolonial agency in the Ah Lum affair. The poisoning of the E Sing Bakery Bread occurred on the eve of the second Opium War. For a colony established on poison, opium, the valency of an act of rebellion which injects poison back into the daily bread of the colonizer must not be overlooked. It becomes a fitting metaphor for the eruption of otherness into the space of white domesticity. Attempting to contain the contagion of panic, the body politic of colonial Hong Kong convulsively expelled its foreign hosts.

And yet, in that expulsion, there is a residual apprehension. Cheong Ah Lum's freedom functions as a conspicuous example of the inability of colonial symbolic management to safeguard the colonial community from the possibility of future contamination and malignancy. Despite the horrors of a day of endless retching, the body was unable to purge itself of all the arsenic. Despite the upheavals of mass deportations, the body politic of colonial Hong Kong could not to purge itself of all its poisoning agents.

The white bread of colonial Hong Kong undergoes a violent reinscription and is transformed from an object of ordinary nourishment into one of poison and danger. In his re-reading of Plato's Pharmacy, Derrida notes that this story of the origin of writing has been fundamentally misread because it relies on a translation of the word "*pharmakon*" which occludes the ambivalence of its meaning. Previous to Derrida's intervention, *pharmakon* had been translated as "remedy." Derrida argues that this "translation by 'remedy' can thus be neither accepted nor simply rejected… Writing is no more valuable, says Plato, as a remedy than as a poison… There is no such thing as a harmless remedy. The *pharmakon* can never be simply beneficial" (99). Thus every antidote must contain within it another kind of poison. The power of the signs of insurgency lies in the understanding that nothing is safe from the violence of reinscription – at any moment, the potentially curative may emerge as poisonous and vice versa.

Understanding the sign of the poisoned bread within Derrida's reading of the *pharmakon* makes possible a reading of anti-colonial insurgency which is not mired to a positivist notion of agency. The "victory" does not lie in the poisoning, but in the effects of ambivalence unleashed by this reinscription of the ordinary, of daily bread. In her reading of Guha's work on rumour in "Deconstructing Historiography," Spivak argues that rumour can be most usefully understanding as a form of "illegitimate writing rather than the authoritative writing of the law" (23). By the writing of the law, Spivak recalls for us Plato's association between "speech and law, *logos* and *nomos*. Laws speak" ("Deconstructing" 23). For Spivak,

> [r]umour is a relay of something always assumed to be pre-existent. In fact the mistake of the colonial authorities was to take rumour for speech, to impose the requirements of speech in the narrow sense upon something that draws its strength from participation in writing in the general sense. (24)

Sidestepping the phonocentrism of taking rumour for speech and thus attributing to it an authority which it cannot have, and which it thrives without – "rumour is not error but primordially (originally) errant, always in circulation with no assignable source" (Spivak "Deconstructing" 23) – Spivak illuminates rumour as *pharmakon*. Understanding the power of subaltern reinscriptions thus demands attending to the poisonous as well as the curative effects of writing.

Let me turn then to another rumour, another inscription. The second meal: a Chinese Canadian restaurant today. Stepping through the doors, you will sit down at one of the booths. Opening the menu, you will come to sweet and sour pork.

The origins of the Cantonese name for sweet and sour pork, a staple of Chinese-Canadian restaurant menus, bears the slivers of a textual, nominal resistance. The real sweet and sour dish is all about bones, drenched in honey and vinegar and succulently crisp. When Chinese cooks on the railway made this dish for Europeans, one version of the story goes, they were chastised for stealing the meat and serving their superiors only the bones. The cooks then left the meat on the bones and re-named the dish *goo lo yok* in the village dialect, *gwei lo yok* in Cantonese, or "honky meat" in English. It was a little culinary joke with a rebellion in the ribs. On Chinese restaurant menus today, the words *goo lo yok* have no literal meaning but are a phonetic approximation of the village dialect -- the original slur phonetically translated and defamiliarized in translation. This nominal resistance, this moment of postcolonial ribbing, has become so standardized that contemporary consumers of Chinese food never realize they are ingesting chunks of sly civility with every sweetly sour mouthful.

It is in this second meal that I want to look now at the residual of resistance in diaspora. What happens when the eruption of otherness occurs in the space of migrancy, when the native at home is transported and becomes the migrant, the diasporic subject? How do you read for postcolonial agency not just in the slenderness of historical narrative, as Bhabha asks, but also in the precariousness of migrancy? In Hong Kong 1857, we have a narrative of containment and expulsion; in the narrative of sweet and sour pork, we have a semiotic virus which cannot be contained. Unlike the Ah Lum affair where the lingering suspicions, the residual, followed the subjects of resistance, in sweet and sour pork, the residual follows the object. Raymond Williams writes that

> [t]he residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural processes, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. Thus certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms

> of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue. (122)

Williams distinguishes the residual from the archaic, noting that the archaic is "that which is wholly recognized as an element of the past, to be observed, to be examined, or even on occasion to be consciously 'revived'" (122). This understanding of the residual is one that recognizes explicitly its potential as "alternative or even oppositional… to the dominant culture" (Williams 122). The residue of sweet and sour pork opens up a reading of white anxiety which is not unrelated to the histories of Chinese migration. Following the object, sweet and sour pork, we can track the lingering unease of white authority and the incorporation of a nominal resistance which has spread throughout the Canadian cultural reality in the menus of the ubiquitous Chinese diner.

The story of sweet and sour pork shares with rumour some defining features. It has no basis in fact. It would be wrong to read it in any literal sense as a history of the evolution of a particular dish on the contemporary menu. It is not an unearthed artifact of food history, brushed off and translated. Whether or not it is true is irrelevant because the narrative's currency lies not in any claim it might have to historical truth value but in its circulation. The narrative's value lies in a re-telling which suggests the existence of another register of emplacement, another temporality of enunciation. As Bhabha notes of the chapati, "[w]hether we take the chapatis as historical 'myth' or treat them as rumour, they represent the emergence of a form of social temporality that is iterative and indeterminate" (200).

The difference in the story of sweet and sour pork is that we have a myth or rumour that circulates in limited form – only amongst the Chinese-speaking diasporic community. This is a story that is twice-buried under the cover of another language, Toisanese under Cantonese under English. It does not circulate amongst settler colonialists and so, unlike the poisoned bread of 1857, the history of its effects unfold differently. There is no contagious panic through which we might look for the agency of the Chinese subject. Read under the rubric of the agency of the sign of resistance circulating electrically through the colonial community, the story of sweet and sour pork seems to have had no effect at all. A dead letter gathering dust, the sly civility of sweet and sour pork seems to have missed its destination. Its potential for agency seems to be annulled by the mistake of its address. This is not just the problem of language. In 1857, the problem of language was equally present. This is about a process of submersion which happens through incorporation.

Our current models of postcolonial agency ultimately dwell upon the agency of the native. They do not translate entirely in the space of diaspora. Here, we are really talking about the migrant. The narrative of sweet and sour pork suggests the possibility of another model of agency, one that does not effect expulsion but consumption and incorporation. And so I come to the meal that is leftover and the incorporation of the residual. As Williams notes, dominant culture deals with residual elements through incorporation. While "[a] residual cultural element is usually at some distance from the effective dominant culture… some part of it, some version of it… will in most cases have had to be incorporated if the effective dominant culture is to make sense in these areas" (Williams 123). However, incorporation is not without its risks.

Freud's story of the totem meal is one of the most famous tales of incorporation in the western canon. Relating the circulation of the chapati in colonial history to the totem meal, Bhabha notes that "[i]t is the indeterminacy of meaning, unleashed by the contingent chapati that becomes the totem meal for historians of the Mutiny. They bite the greased bullet and circulate the myth of the chapati" (202). While Bhabha reads a totemic value in the chapati, a place where the narrative of colonial history must return to again and again for its own legitimating mythology, in Identification Papers, Diana Fuss reminds us that the narrative of the totem meal has a specifically colonial history. The often forgotten subtitle of Freud's Totem and Taboo, "Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics," functions as a reminder that, as Freud's own preface to the book notes, the essays in the book "represent a first attempt on [his] part at applying the point of view and the findings of psycho-analysis to some unsolved problems of social psychology [*Völkerpsychologie*]" (xiii).[21] The story of the totem meal is first and foremost the story of identification with otherness through violent incorporation.

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[21] A. A Brill's 1918 translation of Totem and Taboo highlights the text's preoccupation with race more explicitly than James Strachey's subsequent translation in the Standard Edition. Brill's translation of the same line from the preface suggests that the essays in the book "represent [Freud's] first efforts to apply view-points and results of psychoanalysis to unexplained problems of *racial psychology*" (ix , my emphasis). Strachey's translation of the term *Völkerpsychologie* suppresses the racial undertones of the text. However, neither the Strachey nor the Brill translation is satisfying. Both seem anachronistic in their readings of the compound adjective *Völkerpsychologie*. As Karyn Ball notes via electronic mail in response to my query, Brill's translation suggests an "overdetermined association with race and Strachey's use of the phrase 'social psychology' has institutional and disciplinary valences for a contemporary reader which the phrase would not have had for Freud." Given the historical situating of a term as vexed as *volk* in 1912 Germany when the essays were first published, Ball suggests that the compound adjective *Völkerpsychologie* might be more usefully thought of as referring to a sense of a public imaginary or mindset. This instability around the translating *Völkerpsychologie* itself points to a larger issue in the text around the situating of cultural others.

Situating the story of sweet and sour pork within an understanding of the problem of identification gives new meaning to the idea of "eating Chinese." In the Freudian story of the totem meal, the brothers of a clan contend with their fear and jealousy of the totem (who is the substitute for the father) by killing and consuming it. In so doing, the "clansmen acquire sanctity by consuming the totem: they reinforce their identification with it and with one another" (Freud 140). Afterwards, the brothers feel guilt and remorse and hold a memorial festival to allay their guilt. Fuss argues that there is an intimate relationship between cannibalism and identification where she "uncovers the *violence* at the heart of identification. All active identifications, including positive ones, are monstrous assassinations: the Other is murdered and orally incorporated before being entombed inside the subject" (34). Although Fuss' interpretation is very compelling, the violence of identification would be more poignantly understood if we complicate her reading of the cannibalistic moment of identification. Fuss is a little misleading in suggesting that all acts of identifications are monstrous assasinations. Freud's totem meal is not only about the repetition of the actual act of violence, the murder of the father, but rather the repetition which represses and preserves the desire for violence. In this sense, it is at once an enactment and a disavowal. This understanding of the doubled-edge of identification explains more satisfactorily the work of identification at the heart of the liberal project of the incorporation of otherness. The cannibalism which girds Freud's totem meal is more than a transparent "colonialist construction of the Other as primitive, bestial, and predatory" (Fuss 36). It is also a clue to the desire and repression of otherness in modern liberal states. In 1857 Hong Kong, the government could and did attempt to simply deport thousands of native Hong Kong inhabitants from the colony. In contemporary Canada, it is the problem of the incorporation of otherness which the repression and preservation of the desire for violence mediates. The violence of identification is then more than just "the primary means of gaining control over the objects outside itself; identification is a form of mastery modeled directly on the nutritional instinct" (Fuss 35). The violence of identification lies in the incorporation of otherness where the enactment of the cannibalistic scene is also simultaneously disavowed.

In the context of identification, the idea of eating Chinese takes on the significance of a moment of violent incorporation with all of the cannibalistic connotations that accompany that moment of consumption.[22] However, eating Chinese in

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[22] In her essay "Anthropology and race in Brazilian modernism" Zita Nunes also writes of the relationship between race, cannibalism, and the problem of the residual or what is leftover.While my argument has taken a detour through the issue of identification and Freud's totem meal, Nunes' analysis focuses more specifically on the problem of race in Brazil and a reading of Brazilian modernism. Nunes focuses on the Brazilian modernist movement's emphasis on cultural cannibalism articulated in texts such as Oswald be Andrade's *O manifesto pau Brazil* (The brazilwood manifesto) and *O manifesto antropofago* (The cannibalist manifesto). Writing of the Brazilian modernist movement's approach to cultural mixing and miscegenation through the cannibalist method, Nunes notes that the desire to consume and absorb what is useful in a culture and excrete the rest fails to recognize the exclusions inherent in excretion. "The law of assimilation is that there must always be a remainder, a residue – something (someone) that has resisted or escaped incorporation, even when the nation produces narratives of racial democracy to mask this tradition of resistance" (Nunes 125). For Nunes, the remainder constitutes a problem for the state.

In her essay "The Melting Pot of Assimilation: Cannibalizing the Multicultural Body" Sneja Gunew also discusses the idea of cannibalism in relation to multiculturalism, specifically that of multicultural food festivals. Through the work of Julia Kristeva, Gunew argues that "while food signifies actual bodies it also stands in for… language itself. thus the dominant culture engages with multicultural cuisine as a way of not acknowledging multicultural words" (147). Gunew explores mother-daughter relationships in a number of Australian minority writers and charts some of the ways in which food replaces language and, in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari's work on Kafka, deterritorializes language from within (155).

Canada is not simply a mastery of Chinese otherness driven by the nutritional instinct. It is repetition of the cannibalistic scene where the desire for violence is both preserved and repressed. It is an enactment of violence at the same time that it disavows it through the positivism of celebrating otherness.

And yet this form of mastery depends upon a stabilized otherness. Keeping in mind that Freud's project in this meditation on the lives of "these poor naked cannibals" is one of understanding the less well-developed members of his own contemporary society, the dependence of the totem meal, the scene of cannibalism crossed with parricide, on an absolute primitive other becomes especially paramount (Freud 2). As Fuss notes, Freud's account depends upon an understanding of the savage as being perpetually suspended in the timelessness of perpetual otherness: "Freud relies upon the signifier of temporality to construct the racial Other in culturally ethnocentric terms, reading in the unconscious life of 'primitives' the preservation of 'the primeval past in a petrified form'" (Fuss citing Freud 35). This construction of otherness as without a history, as perpetually caught in an evolutionary stage prior to that of the European is a familiar one in postcolonial theory. As Bhabha's work on the colonial stereotype in "The Other Question" makes clear, stereotype depends upon a fetishized fixing of the racialized subject. Similarly, as documents such as the 1885 Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration reveal, there is a kind of timelessness, a perpetual sameness, read onto Chineseness in Canada.[23] The Chinese subject has always been

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[23] In "Re-reading Chinese Head Tax Racism" I explore the discursive production of Chinese as a legal category in the 1885 Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration.

Chinese and will always be Chinese. Sweet and sour pork has always been on the menu. It has always tasted like this. It always will.

The story of sweet and sour pork poses a challenge to the narrative of the primitive and unchanging ethnic other. The nominal resistance of sweet and sour pork suggests that Chineseness in Canada, the construction of Chineseness in migrancy, not only has a history, but a genealogy. The Freudian story of the totem meals is the story of the genesis of culture: "The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind's earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things – of social organization, of moral restrictions and religion" (Freud 142). We can understand the story of sweet and sour pork as having a kind of counter-totemic value. The story of sweet and sour pork functions as the story of the genesis of fake Chinese food. It would be the story of the creation of a Chineseness specifically for western consumption and this Chineseness comes to stand in for Chineseness in general in Canadian culture. The story of sweet and sour pork suggests the creation and circulation of a Chineseness that is a substitute for the authentic, timeless, and unchanging other of settler colonial consuming desires. In this story of creation, the Chinese immigrant denies the white settler colonial subject the moment of identification, of violent incorporation while appearing to provide it. The story suggests that the idea of "eating Chinese," with all the violence of appropriation and incorporation which accompanies it, is not quite eating Chinese at all. In thinking that he is eating Chinese, the settler colonialist will actually consume *goo lo yok*, white man meat, a version of himself, will engage in a moment of symbolic self-cannibalism. Serving back to the settler colonialist his own excessive desires, the story deflects the violence of colonial identification and incorporation away from the Chinese subject and back towards the settler colonial one. This narrative suggests a way in which the Chinese migrant escapes the dialectic of self-otherness. Chinese migrants did not need whiteness or Europeanness to define themselves. Right from the beginning, there was another register of emplacement.

In the space between *goo lo yok* and sweet and sour pork, we can hear the doubled discourse of diasporic resistances. As I will discuss in more depth in the following chapter, the doubled process of naming extends to the doubled language of the menu itself. The ambivalence of European authority surfaces in suspicions around the doubleness of the menu. Not only is there a Chinese chop suey menu juxtaposed across the Western one of hamburgers and milkshakes, but there is also always a lingering sense that the menu doesn't tell the whole of the story. Somewhere, past the swinging doors dividing those in the diner from those in the kitchen, there is the suspicion that there are dishes cooked which are simply not on the menu. We've all heard the urban myth about how Chinese restaurants have one menu for white people and another for Chinese people. What the menu makes manifest is the latent suspicion that all is not self-evident. What is maddening about the menu is that it is at once explicitly readable and equivocally illegible. Along the margins of the menu lies the possibility of conspiracy, of another language, of a second menu.

Let us return to the material of sweet and sour pork. Imagine it – gooey, unnaturally red-orange, shiny with an aura of plasticity that could come only from that special combination of vegetable oil, rice wine vinegar and a lingering sense of its inauthenticity. After all, we all know that this isn't *real* Chinese food. It is Chinese and not Chinese, at once impossibly full of ethnic meaning and yet strangely meaningless in that excess. "The discursive figure of rumour produces an infectious ambivalence, an 'abyssal overlapping', of too much meaning and a certain meaninglessness" (Bhabha 202). In this materiality ambivalent plasticity, let me explore further the relationship between rumour and history.

Describing the way in which rumour can bend and change according to the subjectivity of its transmitter, Guha proposes that

> rumour functions as a free form liable to a considerable degree of improvisation as it leaps from tongue to tongue. The aperture which it has built into it by virtue of anonymity permits its message to be contaminated by the subjectivity of each of its speakers and modified as often as any of them would want to embellish or amend it in the course of transmission. The outcome of all this is a *plasticity* that enables it to undergo transformations.... (261, my emphasis)

In this plastic quality of rumour, in the way it changes shape while still retaining the trace of its original form, there is a sense of the materiality of rumour's memory – a sense of its materials memory. Borrowing the phrase from materials engineering, Richard Terdiman suggests that signs carry within them a quality not unlike that of a plastic spoon or the crease in a pair of perma-press slacks. Bend them, fold them, and they will still retain the trace of their original shape. Terdiman notes that

> [c]ertain products and materials resume their shape after they have been deformed… This property is termed "materials memory." It seems a process without a subject: it "just happens." This may be a useful notion for understanding the conservative character built into social existence and practice by the sorts of

> mechanisms Marx and Freud – among many others – have sought to account for. Such a concept would allow us to argue that the knowledge of social process does not disappear, but (like the productivity of the worker reified in the tool) rather it seems to *migrate* to a different place, into a text different from the one we carry in our recollection. Such a memory forcefully produces the past in the present. (35)

In the aura of plasticity which attends the materiality of sweet and sour pork with all of its shiny red-orange artificiality we might read for the production of the past in the present. In the lingering sense of its inauthenticity lies precisely the moment of the echo, of the materials memory of a sign which carries with it the memory of its production. The plasticity of sweet and sour pork carries within it an echo of an earlier resistance. Knowledge of that social process does not disappear and resistance does not simply end with the deportations and failed judicial processes. Rather, it resonates through history into a different text.

The story of sweet and sour pork destabilizes Chineseness in a nominal resistance which forces into the present the history of its production. Terdiman argues that "[w]e are not free to keep the past *past*—it colonizes our present whether or not we realize its encroachment" (46). The materials memory of signs persistently press into the their use in the present. Terdiman notes that Flaubert's *bêtisement* of language, the process of importing clichés, banalities and platitudes into the high style of his own text, produced a dialogism which Bakhtin later theorized.[24] "In effect, Flaubert was exploring the capacity of language... to reproduce itself in difference" (Terdiman 46). The *bêtise* infects language so that language becomes an uncontrolled process of continual citation. The past of language continually infects its present, bouncing back through the memory of the production of its significations. The past of sweet and sour pork inexorably seeps into the present of its consumption; the history of coolie labour echoes in the plasticity of its red-orange sauce and colonizes the present of its consumption.

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[24] See Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel."

Signs carry within them the capacity for rememoration. It is not that the bread of the Ah Lum affair and the sweet and sour pork of contemporary menus are historically contiguous or causal, but that they offer one way of reading both the affinities and the distinctions between two different resistances in two different historical moments in two different nation spaces. As Terdiman points out, the process of inscription and reinscription is one that is necessarily about history, about the contagious process of citation and re-citation. The poisoning of the bread in 1857 emerges as a violent reinscription of the ordinary into a sign of danger and insurgency. The story of sweet and sour pork embeds within its nourishing exterior a barb, a serving back to Europe-in-Canada a sign of its own excessive desire. As Derrida's theory of the *pharmakon* suggests, writing, inscription, always carries within it the potential to be both poisonous and curative. Every remedy carries within it the potential for violent reinscription, for poison. In sweet and sour pork, the residue of arsenic remains in the story of its production. Guha's thinking on rumour anticipates the way in which agency thrives on continual citation. "The additions, cuts and twists introduced into a rumour in the course of its circulation transform its message (often just minimally) by such degrees as to adjust it to the variations within a given ideology or mode of popular expression and by doing so broaden the range of its address" (Guha 261). The agency of Guha's text thrives on contamination. In the story of sweet and sour pork, we can locate a citation which thrives on the traces of old poisonings.

In both colonial Hong Kong and the Chinese diaspora in Canada, we have an agency without a singular agent of history. The affinity between subjects of colonial Hong Kong and diasporic subjects in Canada lies precisely in the frustration of the colonial and settler colonial desire for identifiable and knowable agents. However, these two subjectivities diverge when we give full recognition to the differences which govern their existence. Resistance under a colonial regime where poisoning the entire colonial community with a single batch of morning bread is conceivable differs profoundly from resistance under a liberal state as a migrant subject. Within the difference between a colonial regime's response to the unknowability of anti-colonial agency and that of the Europe-in-Canada's response to diasporic agency lies the difference between expulsion and incorporation. In the diaspora, the precariousness of migrancy forces a different kind of engagement with power than that of anti-colonial resistance. As I noted earlier in this chapter, Avtar Brah's discussion of the relative sense of what a minority might constitute highlights the necessity of theorizing diasporic agency by thinking through the gap between minority discourse and postcolonial theory.

Tracking the residuum of sweet and sour, we find that there is another language of emplacement -- that of the migrant. The agency of sweet and sour pork cannot be symbolically managed not merely because it occurs in a foreign language, but because it asserts a different register of emplacement altogether. In delivering back to Europe-in-Canada a sign of its own excess, Chinese cooks on the railway also produced a narrative of resistance which would circulate throughout the Canadian culinary landscape; it is a resistance which becomes a part of the Canadian body politic in the meal that is consumed and incorporated.

This chapter tracks the relationship between postcolonial and diaspora studies and suggests that postcolonial models of agency enable a reading of diasporic agency which is dispersed, without a single agent, hero(ine) or authorial presence. I have also argued that reading for diasporic agency demands a different, altered model than that of postcolonial theory. The postcolonial model of agency offered by Bhabha and derived from the work of Ranajit Guha does not entirely translate to the space of the diaspora. Agency looks different depending on whether you are a native or a migrant. What the narrative of sweet and sour pork highlights is how – and this is the meal consumed – like the poisoned loaves of Hong Kong 1857, we have a narrative where agency is dispersed. There is no single historical agent who poisoned the loaves at the E Sing bakery; there is no single historical agent who re-named sweet and sour pork. And unlike the meal expelled, in the narrative of sweet and sour, migrant agency takes a different form. In that form, I come to what is leftover: the meal that is incorporated. I am suggesting that in diasporic space, the model of agency functions less on panic than on the incorporation of the residual. Nevertheless, the relationship between the postcolonial and the diasporic is an intimate one. The challenge of a diasporic reading of agency lies in looking for the productivity of that intimacy. The diasporic cannot forget the history of colonial displacements. From the acerbity of rice wine vinegar, I hope our tongues have found their way to honeyed ginger, to the culinary joke in the nominal resistance of contact zone cuisine.

Chapter Two

On the Menu:

Time and Chinese Restaurant Counterculture[1]

> There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting. Consider this utterly commonplace situation: a man is walking down the street. At a certain moment, he tries to recall something, but the recollection escapes him. Automatically, he slows down. Meanwhile, a person who wants to forget a disagreeable incident he has just lived through starts unconsciously to speed up his pace, as if he were trying to distance himself from a thing still too close to him in time.
>
> In existential mathematics, that experience takes the form of two basic equations: the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting. (Milan Kundera, Slowness 39)

Almost nobody does it anymore. If you take the slower road south down the middle of Alberta from Edmonton to Calgary, following the old rail line, you will cut across Main Street, Olds, Alberta, where you might stop for lunch at the A & J Family Restaurant (see fig. 1). In 1915, you would have stepped across the railway platform (the railway stopped running a long time ago but the station is still there, empty and abandoned) and ordered a hot lunch at what was then known simply as the Public Lunch Counter (see fig. 2).

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[1] An abbreviated version of this chapter titled "Serving Chinese and Canadian Food: Chinese Restaurant Counterculture and the Time of the Menu" has been accepted for

> There is a long history to the small town Chinese Canadian restaurant. Work on Chinese diaspora communities in Canada has tended to focus on representations of Chinese immigrants in large urban centers such as Vancouver and Toronto. While locations such as Vancouver's Chinatown continue to be crucial sites for exploring Chineseness in Canada, relatively little attention has been paid to the more disparate but nonetheless persistently present communities of Chinese people in small towns across Canada. Recently, critics such as Ien Ang and Aihwa Ong have explored the important ways in which postmodern ethnicities and flexible citizenships intervene in a hegemonic idea of China as a center of identification. In their discussions, an apparently frictionless mobility – access to plane tickets for destinations all over the world, multiple passports – is part of a picture of flexible citizenship. Against the velocity of Ang and Ong's new, jet-setting Chineseness, I consider slowness, of a seemingly anachronistic Chineseness – for example, that of the small town Chinese Canadian restaurant – as a site of diasporic resistance and agency. Chinese immigration changed the restaurant industry in Canada. According to the 1931 Canadian census, Chinese made up less than one percent of the Canadian population, and yet one out of every five restaurant, café, or tavern keepers was of Chinese origin. More than one out of every three male cooks was Chinese (Reiter 30). It is no exaggeration

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publication in Culture and Transnationalism: Film, Writing, Society, edited by Philip to say that there are very few small towns in Canada without Chinese restaurants. This chapter explores the small town Chinese Canadian restaurant and traces the possibilities of Chinese diasporic agency in the text of the menus. Taking a slower path, along the abandoned rail lines which carry in them the echo of a history of indentured Chinese labor,[2] and stopping in at the restaurants which are inevitably located near now empty train stations, I hope to recover the bond between slowness and memory, one location of Chinese diasporic agency, in the time of the menu.

I want to situate my reading of the menus as an intervention against two broad displacements that I see happening in Chinese diaspora studies specifically as well as in diaspora studies more generally. First, the spatial metaphor of diasporic mobility risks displacing the temporal challenges that diasporic subjects pose to western European narratives of progress. Secondly, the idea of the metropolitan trajectory has been taken too literally and mistaken for a trajectory of metropolitan migration. Let me begin by addressing this latter displacement which will lead to my discussion of the former.

Holden and Maria Ng.

[2] Although Patricia Roy has argued that Chinese railway workers were not technically coolies because they came to work voluntarily, most historians agree that the conditions of their labor were almost identical to that of indenture. Roy writes that "the Chinese… were not technically [coolies] having come to Canada as free laborers or under voluntary term contracts: the true coolie was usually a captive who had no choice about where he went or what he did" (18). However, Chinese railway workers had very little choice about where they went and the conditions of their arrival produced an informal indenture system. Chinese laborers usually had their head tax and transportation fees paid for first by a contractor or subcontractor and they would be expected to eventually work off those debts, producing a system of indentured labor that was never formally named as such in Canada. The elaborate system of subcontracting made it particularly easy for the Canadian government to declare that it was not employing indentured labor. See Lee p. 47, Li p. 20-23 and Wickberg p. 20-24.

In the previous chapter, following from Jenny Sharpe's observation,[3] I noted that contemporary diasporic trajectories tend to be from the south to the north, from the postcolonial space to the metropolitan one. Given that we understand diasporic subjectivity as constituted at least in part by the violences of colonialism, this trajectory follows the course of colonial displacement. However, one of the effects of the generality of this trajectory is that diasporic agency has been conceived of almost exclusively in terms of an urban focus. The difference I want to highlight here seems like a straightforward one – diasporic populations are not always urban in the locations of their settlement. Particularly if we pay attention to the old diaspora of indenture and slavery, we can see that the urban space is simply not the only place where diasporic subjects ended up.

In "Rethinking Diaspora(s)," Khachig Tölölyan argues that the "*nation's* aspiration to normative homogeneity is challenged by various forms of cultural practices and knowledge production, *especially in major urban centers* and in the arts and humanities departments of many North American and Australian universities" (4, latter emphasis mine). Tölölyan's subsequent observations in the article about the need for rigorous attention to the ways in which diasporic critical practice may in fact collude with the very forms of hegemonic power that these critical practices see diasporas as challenging are crucial for future thinking on diaspora as a critical category.[4] However, his emphasis on the urban migrant betrays an exemplarizing of metropolitan trajectories.

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[3] In "Is the United States Postcolonial?" Sharpe notes that "[t]he designation of postcolonial as an umbrella term for diasporic and minority communities is derived in part from an understanding of decolonization as the beginning of an unprecedented migration from the former colonies to advanced industrial centres" (182).

[4] See also Spivak's "Diasporas old and new" and Mishra's "The diasporic imaginary."

Tölölyan's discussion gestures to a wider tendency in current diaspora discussions which naturalizes and emphasizes the diasporic as a particularly urban formation. Writing about Martin Delany's experience in England, W.E.B. DuBois' time in Germany and Richard Wright's encounter with France, Gilroy argues that black literary traditions do

> not fit unambiguously into a time-consciousness derived from and punctuated exclusively by changes in the public, urban worlds of London, Berlin and Paris. Writers, particularly those closest to the slave experience, repudiated the heroic narrative of western civilization and used a philosophically informed approach to slavery in order to undermine the monumental time that supports it. (197)[5]

I want to hang on to Gilroy's important observation regarding an alternative temporality that challenges a European national imaginary, but I also want to pause on these "urban worlds of London, Berlin and Paris." For Gilroy, one of the strongest arguments for diasporic agency lies in reading them as challenges to hegemonic nation-state formations. Diasporas have been read as social formations which contest the integrity of the European nation-state. Tölölyan, for example, observes that just as the nation-state has begun to encounter limits to its hegemonic desires, diasporas have emerged in intellectual discourses as exemplary communities of this particular transnational moment (4). Building on his work in the Black Atlantic, in Against Race, Gilroy argues that "[c]onsciousness of diaspora affiliation stands opposed to the distinctively modern structures and modes of power orchestrated by the institutional complexity of nation-states. Diaspora identification exists outside of and sometimes in opposition to the political forms and codes of modern citizenship" (124). Although The Black Atlantic has recently undergone a number of important critiques,[6] Gilroy's exploration of a counterculture of modernity and, connected to that, his insistence on an alternative temporality of diasporic cultural expression have been ground-breaking interventions in diasporic thinking. Gilroy holds that diasporas allow for the emergence of complex subjectivities which work against forms of nationalism:

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[5] Ian Baucom notes that Gilroy's notion of a ruptured, nonsynchronous temporality is by no means exclusive to The Black Atlantic, but has been previously explored by

> … valuing diaspora more highly than the coercive unanimity of the nation, the concept [of diaspora] becomes explicitly antinational. This shift is connected with transforming the familiar unidirectional nature of diaspora as a form of catastrophic but simple dispersal that enjoys an identifiable and reversible originary moment – the site of trauma—into something far more complex. (128)

And yet, within the complexity of this explicitly antinational social formation, the worlds of London, Berlin, and Paris remain as crucial berthing places of the black literary culture.

In a similar move, Leela Gandhi identifies diasporas as locations of postnational culture within a particularly metropolitan milieu which collapses a metropolitan trajectory with settlement in a metropolis. Although she criticizes overly romanticized conceptions of diasporic exile, she follows Gilroy in viewing diasporas as locations of

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Althusser, Bloch, Braudel and Derrida. See Baucom, "Introduction: Atlantic Genealogies" p. 8-12.

[6] While Laura Chrisman's "Journeying to death: Gilroy's Black Atlantic" and Neil Lazarus' "Is a Counterculture of Modernity a Theory of Modernity?" argue that Gilroy's analysis fails to address the conditions of the reproduction of blackness, Chris Bongie's "A Street Named Bissette: Nostalgia, Memory, and the Cent-Cinquantenaire of the Abolition of Slavery in Martinique (1848-1998)," David Scott's chapter, "An Obscure Miracle of Connection" in Refashioning Futures and Charles Piot's "Atlantic Aporias:

transnational and postnational cultural formations. Noting that "[s]ubsequent waves of voluntary and unwanted migrations continue to challenge the cultural and demographic stability of the Western world," Gandhi sees diasporas as "troubling [the] reciprocity between the metropolitan center and the colonial periphery" so that "the metropolis is not safe from the cultural contagion of its own 'peripheral' practices" (134). Gandhi's reading of diaspora's potential as a contagious force returning to infect the culture of the metropolitan center echoes Homi Bhabha's argument for diasporic agency within the context of nationalism.

In "DissemiNation," Bhabha reads in the figure of the diasporic subject the potential for a disruption of the integrity of the colonial national through the haunting return of the postcolonial migrant. Echoing Gilroy's discussion of time and a black counterculture of modernity, and productively intervening in Benedict Anderson's use of Walter Benjamin's idea of "homogenous empty time,"[7] Bhabha highlights the profound ambivalence in Benjamin's concept of homogenous empty time that is overlooked in Anderson's usage. Bhabha suggests that the time of the nation is actually split into a performative and a pedagogical time: "In the production of nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*" (Bhabha 145-146). In diasporic subjects, Bhabha locates a disruptive potential

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Africa and Gilroy's Black Atlantic" seek in various ways to think through the problem of memory and "tradition" which Gilroy poses particularly in the latter half of the book.

[7] See Anderson 22-36.

where cultural difference frustrates the desire for repetitious similarity in the articulation of the nation:

> The aim of cultural difference is to rearticulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying position of the minority that resists totalization – the repetition that will not return as the same, the minus-in-origin that results in political and discursive strategies where adding to does not add up but serves to disturb the calculation of power and knowledge, producing other spaces of subaltern signification. (Bhabha 162)

In this idea of a culturally different migrant who disturbs the enunciation of the Western nation, Bhabha sees the beginnings of diasporic agency. The principal agency of the diasporic subject in "DissemiNation" is that of the haunting return of the avenging angel of the postcolonial subject migrating to the colonial metropole. Writing of Salman Rushdie's archangel Gibreel Farishta in The Satanic Verses, Bhabha suggests that "Gibreel's returning gaze crosses out the synchronous history of England, the essentialist memories of William the Conqueror and the Battle of Hastings" (168). In this configuration of diasporic agency, "through Gibreel, the avenging migrant, we learn the ambivalence of cultural difference: it is the articulation *through* incommensurability that structures all narratives of identification, and all acts of cultural translation" (Bhabha 169).

While this reading of agency illuminates the way in which difference disturbs the unifying time of nationhood, it also poses some substantial conceptual problems for thinking about diasporic agency. What does it mean for diasporic agency to lie solely in the act of a ghostly haunting? Although there are a number of issues within this reading, let me focus on two major limitations with Bhabha's conception of the agential, avenging diasporic angel.

The first lies in the forgetting of historical diasporas. Although Bhabha gestures to the diasporas produced by slavery, indenture and dispossession,[8] their inclusion in a list does not translate into a full recognition of their particularities. Despite his discussion of the Turkish worker in Germany, a worker who enters the text through the mediation of John Berger, the historical "old" diasporas of indenture[9] such as those of the West Indian plantation workers or Chinese railway workers do not have a place in the diasporic agency of "Dissemination." Their agency does not necessarily lie in their return to the metropole, in their haunting of metropolitan consciousness. Rather, we might read the agency of old diasporas precisely in their non-metropolitan persistence.

The possibilities of a non-urban agency leads to the second limit, to the unrelenting urbanity of Bhabha's avenging diasporic subject. Closing the essay with a meditation on the English weather, "DissemiNation" begins with the scattering of peoples and ends with "their gathering in the city. The return of the diasporic; the postcolonial" (169). Within this reading, the city becomes the primary site of this diasporic agency:

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[8] In the opening paragraph of "DissemiNation" Bhabha names the subjects of this essay as those who have lived in "the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering" (139). And in that gathering he includes "the gathering of people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned" (139).

[9] In "The diasporic imaginary" Mishra differentiates between "the older diasporas of classic capitalism and the mid- to late-twentieth-century diasporas of advanced capital to the metropolitan centers of Empire, the New World and the former settler colonies" (421). Similarly, Spivak uses the term old diasporas as "the results of religious oppression and war, of slavery and indenturing, trade and conquest, and intra-European economic migration which, since the nineteenth century, took the form of migration and immigration into the United States" (245).

> … it is to the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diasporic come to change the history of the nation. If I have suggested that the people emerge in the finitude of the nation, marking the liminality of cultural identity, producing the double-edged discourse of social territories and temporalities, then in the West, and increasingly elsewhere, it is the city which provides the space in which emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out. It is there that, in our time, the perplexity of living is most acutely experienced. (Bhabha 170)

Bhabha's diasporic agent is relentlessly metropolitan. And yet, in the case of indentured railway workers or sugar plantation workers, we have diasporic subjects who do not need to engage in any kind of haunting return to the metropolitan centers of subjugation. They were there before the nation became a nation. Chinese migrant laborers arrived in Canada in 1858, nearly ten years before Canada would become Canada.[10]

Although "DissemiNation" does not declare itself to be a meditation on diasporic agency, its closing discussion of Rushdie's archangel Gibreel is nonetheless a significant place in critical discussions where the agency of diasporic subjects is discussed explicitly in their challenge to the European nation-state. The essay's influence as an enormously useful intervention in our thinking on Anderson's imagined communities and the idea of the nation makes a critique of its notion of agency even more crucial. For the overwhelming emphasis on the urban location, on the city as the site of agential return, risks a series of omissions. As I will discuss later in this chapter with respect to discussions of the Chinese diaspora, work such as Aihwa Ong's Flexible Citizenship, the focus on metropolitan transnational agency in Chinese communities has come at the expense of a different kind of flexible citizen – that of the non-metropolitan migrant who has slowly and persistently asserted a particular and subversive script of nationhood.

By insisting on the urgency of a turn to examining a non-metropolitan diasporic subject, I am not arguing for a fantasized idyllic notion of a rural subjectivity. As Raymond Williams deftly illustrates, "the city and the country are changing historical realities" (289) and it would be a mistake not to see the larger narratives within which a fantasized conception of the metropolitan and the non-metropolitan are situated. In Williams' study, the changing meaning of country life is related to the changes in city life, and these changes need to be traced within the larger story of the progress of capitalism. Making the connection between agrarian capitalism, plantation colonialism, and neo-imperialism, Williams observes, "What the oil companies do, what the mining companies do, is what landlords did, what plantation owners did and do" (293). And within this story of the advance of capital, there is also the story of the dislocation of peoples.[11] The usefulness of the analyses in The Country and the City has little to do with who lives in the country or the city or even what the country or the city might be, but with what those concepts stand in for and how they are used. Following from this

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[10] See Edgar Wickberg's From China to Canada and Peter Li's The Chinese in Canada for excellent overviews of pre-confederation Chinese immigration.

[11] Williams connects the rural to urban migrations flows with those of the flows from the colonies or ex-colonies to the metropolis, noting that "ironically, unemployment in the colonies prompted a reverse migration, and following an ancient pattern the displaced from the 'country' areas came, following the wealth and stories of wealth, to the 'metropolitan' centre, where they were at once pushed in, overcrowded, among the indigenous poor, as had happened throughout the development of cities" (283).

conceptual focus of Williams' work,[12] I want to assert a conceptual rather than demographic argument. While it is true that many Chinese immigrants in Canada did settle and continue to settle in non-urban locations, my turn to the small town Chinese restaurant as a crucial locus for reading diasporic agency lies in my sense that a spatial reading of diasporic agency (which is related to a demographic reading) has eclipsed a temporal one. The presence of the diasporic other in the heart of European and North American metropolises – a presence which takes up space in cities such as London, New York or Vancouver – is a spatialized vision of disturbance which does not always take into account the ways in which diasporic populations might, as Gilroy has so presciently argued, challenge the singular and homogenous temporality of European and North American progress. Bhabha's critique of Anderson's use of Walter Benjamin's concept of homogenous empty time is then an important first step towards understanding how a temporal rupture functions within diasporic agency. I propose that we complicate Bhabha's valuable critique by differentiating and specifying the temporal challenges the diasporic migrant poses to the colonial and settler colonial metropole by turning to the possibility of non-metropolitan temporalites.

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[12] While I am clearly indebted to Williams' argument, I also depart from him in terms of his sense of the progression of history. In the chapter which connects imperialism with the metropolitan, Chapter 24 "The New Metropolis," Williams suggests a sense where the postcolony occupies the space once held by the English countryside: "We can remember our own early literature of mobility and the corrupting process of cities, and see many of its themes reappearing in African, Asian and West Indian literature, itself written, characteristically, in the metrpolitan languages which are themselves among the consequences of mobility. We can read of the restless of villages in so many far countries: in Nkem Nwanko's Danda, in George Lammings's In the Castle of My Skin… And Chinua Achebe, who in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God showed the arrival of the alien system in the villages, shows us the complicated process of education mobility and new kinds of work in the city in No Longer at Ease and Man of the People" (Williams 288). In making these important connections between the postcolony and the English countryside, Williams betrays a subscription to a notion of progress where the postcolony replicates and re-enacts the effects of capitalism within England itself and is thus somewhere further behind on the timeline of development. Despite the importance

Turning to the non-metropolitan migrant enables a more specific turn to temporal agency. Although Bhabha's critique is one that is about the temporal, focusing solely on the urban migrant results in a critique that is fixed on spatial presence, on being "there" (London, Vancouver, Toronto, New York, Los Angeles and so on). As Bhabha's closing meditation on the English weather exposes, this critique is tied to the notion of return and haunting. Even though Bhabha locates diasporic agency within an assertion of a disjunctive temporality, it is the diasporic subject's presence in the metropolis that causes the interruption in the empty time of the colonial and settler colonial nation. In contrast, it is my contention that turning to a more differentiated and specific idea of diasporic arrival enables the exploration of a diasporic temporality which not only interrupts the nation's narrative time, but poses an alternative to it.

Let me be clear: Bhabha's critique of Anderson's misreading of Benjamin's ambivalence is absolutely correct: "Although he borrows his notion of the homogenous empty time of the nation's modern narrative from Walter Benjamin, [Anderson] misses the profound ambivalence that Benjamin places deep with the utterance of the narrative of modernity" (161). Anderson makes the mistake of reading the novel and the newspaper as synchronous with the homogenous empty time of the nation rather than

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of recognizing the possibilities of "a common history" (Williams 288), the early literature of English rural mobility is not quite the literature of decolonization.

looking for the "non-synchronous, incommensurable gap in the midst of storytelling" that Benjamin proposes.[13]

It is in the non-synchronous that Benjamin suggests the possibility of resisting the historicist imperative of progress. Benjamin and Ernst Bloch (although the latter does not appear in Anderson nor in Bhabha) connect empty time with progress. Thus Benjamin writes in "Theses on the Philosophy of History," "[t]he concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogenous, empty time" (261). Similarly, Bloch's notion of "clock-time" links the notion of progress with one of "empty" time (125):

> *Clock-time* is uniformly divided and proceeds in equal periods; it advances 'inexorably': that is, uniformly. Hence it can be expressed by a numerical progression, which makes both the clock-face and the calendar possible. But the form of progression denoted in this way is *wholly indifferent to the contents which occur or do not occur within it*. Time-by-the-clock is abstracted from time-as-it-is-lived… [Clock-time] wholly rectifies time lived, but at the price of formal rigidity. This inflexibility is indispensable in order to measure time—and for working time… for historical chronology, for the terms of validity of legal contracts; as the foot-rule is to the spatial arts, so the metronome is to the arts of time. (125)

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[13] Bhabha draws the notion of a non-synchronous and incommensurable gap in the novel from Benjamin in "The Storyteller": "To write a novel means to carry the incommensurable to extremes in the representation of human life. In the midst of life's fullness, and through the representation of this fullness, the novel gives new evidence of the profound perplexity of living" (Illuminations 87, cited in Bhabha 161).

Benjamin and Bloch both insist on the inextricable relation between time-by-the-clock, homogenous, empty time, and the notion of progress. Against the "mandat[ing of] the present and the future through the idea of progress – the meta-narrative of continuous and directional historical time," Nadia Seremetakis observes that "Benjamin and Bloch emphasized that the most efficacious and pernicious dimension of the constructed continuum was its appearance or presentation as natural" (21). Seremetakis also notes that "Benjamin and Bloch looked to discordant objects, experiences of discontinuity, and culture zones of non-contemporaneity in everyday social practice as containing interruptive possibilities in relation to the dominant myth of the continuum" (21). Rightly, Bhabha identifies Anderson's collapsing of the novel with the synchronicity of the continuum of historicism as a reading that is not only complicit with the compulsions of linear history, but also negligent in its suppression of the oppositional possibilities of the novel.

However, Bhabha's metropolitan (both in the sense of the metropole and the city specifically) bias, a bias which both Benjamin and Bloch also share, overlooks the possibilities for oppositionality in that which is non-metropolitan. Seremetakis argues that Benjamin and Bloch

> tended to ignore or undervalue the extent to which particular cultures and social strata had developed their own indigenous, self-reflexive practices which cultivated break, rupture, discontinuity and alterity in everday modern life. Their relative blindness to this may be attributed to the fact that their analyses were almost exclusively centered on Western European metropolitan cultures and in many ways addressed to the historical problem… embodied by fascism. (21)

What I take from Seremetakis' critique is not a taking of Benjamin and Bloch to task for failing to attend to non-European cultures – as she notes, we need to situate their writings within the historical problem of the rise of fascism in Europe – but the necessity of paying attention to that which may be beyond the metropolitan. I share with Seremetakis a desire to turn

> to those cultures and societies inside and outside Europe that had undergone a historically uneven and incomplete articulation with the economic and ideological forms of European progress. It is precisely at these sites that we can locate staggered and discontinuous material cultures and landscapes, and popular narrative forms that issue diverse temporal and perceptual consciousnesses. (22)

In this sense, I am not suggesting that rural life contains an intrinsically slower temporality than that of the urban. That would be part of the progressivist narrative where cities are the sites of bustling activity and rural spaces are the locations of the idyll and the pastoral. Rather, I am suggesting that in differentiating and specifying diasporic arrival, in seeing the relationship between old and new diasporas rather than treating them as distinct, we can locate a temporality that not only interrupts homogenous empty time, but is alternative to it. What I mean by slowness then is this other register of temporal experience. However, as I will discuss more fully in the final section of this chapter, I also see this alternative temporality as engaging oppositionally with the dominant narrative of temporal progress, of slowing it down by insisting on the presence of the past in the present.

In "DissemiNation," the collapsing of the metropolitan trajectory with a presumption of metropolitan settlement leads me back to the first displacement, the displacement of a diasporic temporality onto spatiality. The vision of the diasporic agent as the avenging angel haunting European metropolitan space is premised on a notion which is by no means unique to Bhabha. It has everything to do with seeing the ways in which diasporic populations negotiate and articulate difference precisely in urban centres such as London, England, or, closer to this project, North American centres such as New York, Toronto or Vancouver. In this vision, locations such as Chinatown become exemplary sites. Displaced, racialized subjects move into the city and assert their otherness by building communities within communities, cities within cities, and disturbing the balance of homogeneous whiteness on which the metropolitan rests. In a number of excellent discussions of Chinatowns in North America,[14] the conceptualization of Chinatown as an ethnic enclave emerges with surprising consistency. While there are some variations, these texts inevitably circle back to the boundedness – either self-imposed or enforced from without – of the urban Chinese communities.[15] Because they represent a dispersed and yet ethnically and racially coherent population, or the impression of one, Chinatowns have become a convenient spatial metaphor for the Chinese diaspora in North America. The metaphor mistakes the space of Chinatown as *the* space of the Chinese diaspora. The prevalence of the assumptions within this spatial metaphor overshadow the potentially disruptive temporality of diasporic communities.

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[14] There is a significant body of scholarship on Chinatowns and the following is a sample of some of the work that has been most useful for my understanding of Chinatown both as a physical and social formation. For historical, geographical and sociological work, see Kay Anderson's Vancouver's Chinatown, Hsiang-Shui Chen's Chinatown No More, Chapter 5 "Building Permanent Chinese American Communities and Displaying American Chinatown Culture, 1920-27" of Shehong Chen's Being Chinese, Becoming Chinese American, David Lai's Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada, Peter Kwong's The New Chinatown, Jan Lin's Reconstructing Chinatown, Ng Wing Chung's The Chinese in Vancouver 1945-80, Chapter 15 "Chinatowns" of Lynn Pan's Sons of the Yellow Emperor. In literary work, A. Robert Lee's essay, "Imagined Cities of China: Timothy Mo's London, Sky Lee's Vancouver, Fae Myenne Ng's San Francisco" argues that each of these texts reproduces a cultural China, an imaginary and transplanted Chinese world, within each of the cities in which the novels are set. Also, within literary criticism, Maria Ng's "Representing Chinatown: Dr. Fu Manchu at the Disappearing Moon Café" argues that Chinatown functions as an overly stereotyped site of racial identifications in the literature of Sky Lee, Irene Lin-Chandler and Sax Rohmer. While I agree with Ng that we must always be vigilant against the perpetuation of stereotype, we must also be attentive to overly easy parallels which occlude critique. There are, for example, crucial differences between London's Limehouse district of Sax Rohmer's work – which departs significantly from North American Chinatowns – and the Chinatown of Sky Lee's novel.

The mistaking of Chinatown as the space of the Chinese diaspora lends itself too easily to a liberal mutliculturalism where the spatial presence of otherness enhances rather than disturbs the liberal state. It is not just that we leave out non-urban populations when we assume that Chinatown is an urban microcosm of China itself, but that this perception of the microcosm, the miniaturization of a racialized culture, neutralizes it as an oppositional site.[16] This is more than just the museumization of a cultural space. This is the paradoxical trajectory of assimilation that enhances dominant culture's sense of its own inclusive superiority. Chinatown is an accepted part of the urban landscape and provides a space of consumption and amusement. It is not that there is no agential potential in Chinatown, but that the overwhelming emphasis on Chinatown as a spatial metaphor for the Chinese diaspora risks occluding other forms of agency emerging in other locations. In not looking for the kinds of oppositional work that might be happening outside of Chinatown, we risk mistaking a spatial presence for an agential spatial haunting. The idea of the enclave suggests a model of assimilation which never has to engage with the ways in which Chinese diaspora populations have done more than just occupy space in Canada, but have fundamentally challenged and, as I will discuss, constituted Canada's own notion of itself.

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[15] Although they reinforce the idea of Chinatown as an ethnic enclave or, to borrow David Lai's phrase, towns within cities, most of the literature argues against viewing Chinatowns as racially or socially homogenous enclaves. Hsiang-Shui Chen, Shehong Chen and Peter Kwong in particular argue for an understanding of the heterogeneity of the Chinatowns of their respective studies. Extending this vision of heterogeneity, the work of Michel LaGuerre and Jan Lin both insists on the need to understand Chinatowns as locally-grounded sites with deeply global connections. In this sense, their work focuses on Chinatown as a site which mediates the flows of culture and capital transnationally and yet still remains within a clearly bounded ethnic enclave. Departing somewhat from this work, Kay Anderson's book on Vancouver's Chinatown argues that Chinatowns are bounded from without by tracing the racist urban planning policies which have created a racially ghettoized community. Recently, her thesis has been taken up by Ng Wing Chung who contests Anderson's reading and argues for something like a subaltern history of the emergence of Vancouver's Chinatown.

[16] Michel Laguerre notes that the grammatical rules behind the naming of enclaves reveals a hierarchical spatial ordering system: "In contrast to the ways in which minoritized quarters are stigmatized as "little" places, the mainstream refers to its space in terms of a new reality, as in "New" England, "New" Britain, "New" London, and "New" York" (6).

In contrast to Chinatowns, the small town Chinese restaurant is anything but an enclave. Although equally pervasive in terms of its dissemination across the Canadian landscape, it suggests a different kind of incorporation – one that is much more precarious if only because of its relative isolation. And yet, in that precariousness, they produce what I will call a countercultural space, a space of alternative temporality expressed through the culture of the counter. Rather than being a city within a city, as Chinatowns imply, they suggest a different model of negotiating otherness where the incorporation of otherness becomes a moment of serving back to Europe-in-Canada its own images, desires and fantasies.

Sometimes abandoned where rail line contracts ended,[17] sometimes voluntarily seeking out locations for new work, a significant number of early Chinese migrants settled in non-urban locations, in small towns and villages throughout Canada. These migrants have no place in a metropolitan migrancy. They do not perform a return to the center. Rather they engage in a form of emplacement. Through texts such as the menus of small town Chinese restaurants, we can trace some of the ways in which they participate in the scripting of their incorporation into the body politic of Canada.

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[17] Chinese workers were often abandoned wherever the contracts for work on the railway line ended and unemployment in these areas produced drifting communities. In some of

As I noted earlier, Chinese immigrants dominated the early restaurant industry in Canada. Following a variety of paths, Chinese immigrants operated more restaurants than any other single immigrant group in Canada. As Wickberg's work on the 1921 Census of Canada shows, Chinese immigrants operated 40% of the restaurant industry in Alberta, 50% of the restaurant industry in Saskatchewan and about a third of the restaurants in Manitoba and Ontario (Wickberg, Table 12). The history of Chinese who had worked as cooks on railway and lumber camps as well as domestic servants in Vancouver and Victoria suggests that there would have been a substantial number of Chinese immigrants who had already been trained in cooking for non-Chinese tastes. What is so interesting then is the way in which Chinese immigrants in Canada have taken positions of servility and unwanted labor and used them to embed within a text such as the restaurant menu their own definitions of Canadian or Western.

In the latter half of this chapter, I will trace some of the ways in which Chinese cooks and restaurateurs create and then contain the particular text of nationhood on the menus of small town Chinese restaurants. They execute precisely the split of nation time which Bhabha outlines in "Dissemination." However, in the time of the menu, Chinese diasporic subjects emerge as manipulators of this split enunciation of nation time. The

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the worst cases, starving workers resorted to petty theft and eating garbage from the homogenous empty time of the Chinese restaurant menu emerges from the hands of Chinese restaurateurs as a subversive text which defines and delineates the idea of Canada for Canadians. In this sense, I locate the agency of Chinese diasporic subjects in Canada not in an impossible return to the metropole, but in the engineering of a mechanics of incorporation. The naturalization of the Chinese restaurant in the landscape of small town Canada attests to the way in which Chinese migrants have embedded particular forms of knowledge and practices, disseminating a vision of what "Canadian" and "Chinese" mean through the text of the restaurant menu.

By exploring the culture of the counter as a counterculture, I am focusing on the ways in which Chinese diasporic subjects transform the position of servitude into a space of the serving back, a space where the subversive potential of serving percolates to the surface. The counterculture of my project clearly is not the counterculture of The Black Atlantic although I am indebted to the space Gilroy has made by making the problem of time a central one for conceptualizing diasporic agency.[18] The counterculture of this

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streets. See Morton 106-107.

[18] In many ways, this chapter has taken Gilroy's work as its departure point. I acknowledge this debt in the spirit of Khachig Tololyan's argument that the black diasporic communities are exceptional in their experiences of racism both historically and in contemporary realities. Recognizing this exceptionality means that we need to think through the ways in which black diaspora criticism offers a space of engagement for Chinese diaspora criticism. There has been relatively little engagement with black diaspora criticism in work on Chinese diasporas. Neither the essays in Tu Wei-Ming's The Living Tree nor Ling-Chi Wang and Wang Gungwu's two volume anthology The Chinese Diaspora raise possible connections with black diaspora criticism. Although Rey Chow's work does not directly refer to diasporic experiences outside of Chinese diasporic ones, her work can be seen as overlapping with Gilroy's in terms of her concern for deconstructing "Chinese" as a center of ethnic identification. See in particular, "Can One Say No to China?" and the introduction to Writing Diaspora. Ien Ang's writing on the Chinese diaspora in On Not Speaking Chinese does refer at several moments to Gilroy's work. Ang focuses largely on ideas of hybridity developed by Gilroy, Homi Bhabha and Garcia Canclini as an alternative to what she has marked as the ethnic conservatism that

project is grounded in the long smooth counter that runs along the length of the restaurant separating the server from the served. Across that shiny expanse, the menu will be passed back and forth, a text which not only mediates the separation, but is read over and over again, presented over and over again – a simple, pedestrian exchange which carries within it the possibilities for something more.

While Gilroy's discussion of the disruptive and alternative temporality of black expressive counterculture dwells on an outer-national agency, one which transcends the borders of the nation-state, this chapter explores a reading of agency within the host-nation. However, this is not solely a Chinese-Canadian resistance. Rather than reading the agency of the menus as within the boundaries of Canada, I want to understand this agency within the larger parameters of a diasporic rubric. In this sense, the subversion of the menus needs to be read as informed by the dislocations of colonialism as well as the continuing difficulties of negotiating the assertion of otherness within a predominantly white cultural space and within the legacy of dislocation. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, a reading for agency which is conscientious of the precariousness of migrancy calls for an attention to the ways in which the agential may have become entrenched within the everyday.

In turning to Chinese restaurant menus as countercultural texts, I want to come back to the argument I began in Chapter One and further elaborate my reading of agency in terms of incorporation. For Gilroy, black music functions as a means by which the "living memory" of the past oppression carries into the present. In the Chinese restaurant menu, I read a strategic incorporation which is not about assimilation, but in fact its

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pervades the Chinese diaspora. See for example her final chapter of the book, opposite. Chinese restaurants are not a sign of assimilation but dissimulation. If, as I have argued, sweet and sour pork served back to Europe-in-Canada a sign of its own excessive greed and embedded into the dish a nominal resistance, how can we read the resistances that are embedded within the menu itself?

The menu textualizes the food that is served. Of course, as Rebecca Sprang notes, the menu is a representational text:

> Sharing the name "menu" were two linked, but rarely identical, entities: the food a restaurant served and its bill of fare. The first resisted duplication and could be described only imprecisely, but the physical object called the *carte* – product not of the variable kitchen but of the reliable printing press – was infinitely reproducible and easily evoked. (Sprang 184)

There is always already a difference between the food on a menu and the food that is actually served. More importantly, the reproducibility of the menu provides a precise and reliable account of one aspect of the restauarant's representation of itself. Sprang highlights the gulf between the menu and the food that might actually be available, on or off the menu, at any particular restaurant. While I will return later in the chapter to these issues of the mechanical reproduction and the menu as a highly representational text, for now, let me simply ask, What, then, does the Chinese restaurant menu represent?

The menus in this chapter span approximately a century of Chinese restaurants in Canada. I read them as text produced and reproduced within the social and political pressures of what it has meant to be marked as Chinese in Canada over the last century. From outright exclusion to restrictive immigration laws to a policy of official liberal

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"Togetherness-in-difference (the uses and abuses of hybridity)."

multiculturalism, the menus in this chapter must be read as texts which have had to engage with the socio-political reality of being Chinese in Canada. The earliest menu is from 1923, the year that the Exclusion Act came into effect. Then, there is the Diamond Grill menu from the 1950s, soon after the end of exclusion. The contemporary menus are taken by following an old north-south Albertan rail route that no longer exists. They reflect the legacy of nearly two decades of official multiculturalism in Canada. As with all ephemera, the restaurant menus have come to me partly through archival research, but also through the inevitable idiosyncracy of word-of-mouth, happy accidents of discovery and the generosity of collectors. The menus that I present in this chapter are by no means a complete or coherent archive. In my dream world, I would have a set of menus following the rise and persistence of a single restaurant. Lacking this dream menu collection, and despite the loose historical trajectory I have traced above, my reading of the menus is necessarily symptomatic rather than comprehensively choronological. These menus are not precise representations of the the time of their existence, but rather suggestive of historical moments and the history that I read them against. Returning then to Gilroy, it is as an intervention within the nation-state's desire for a homogeneous and progressive narrative of emergence, and the assertion of an alternative temporality, a particular form of slowness, that I want to situate the menus as texts of diasporic agency.

In his book of poetry about his father's restaurant in Nelson, British Columbia, Diamond Grill, Wah writes that "[m]aps don't have beginnings, just edges. Some frayed and hazy margin of possibility, absence, gap" (1). Reading the menu as a map to an alternative discourse, this chapter explores three margins, three spaces of possibility, which work together to produce the agency of Chinese migrants – an agency which emerges not in a haunting of the metropolitan center, but in the persistence of the pedestrian, the slow embeddedness of everyday life.

Canadian or Western food: Inventing Canadian food

What is Canadian food? Are we a nation devoid of a national food culture? One of the most curious features of the small town Chinese restaurant is its matter of fact definition of Canadian food. Boldly ignoring any sort of existential crisis about the definition of Canadian culinary culture, Chinese restaurants have gone ahead and named Canadian food for Canadians.

Nowhere else is Canadian food more consistently defined than on the menus of small town Chinese Canadian restaurants (see fig. 3). Although dishes such as tortiere, Atlantic seafood chowder or Beaver Tails are arguably more "Canadian" than the hamburgers and French fries that are typical of the "Canadian" portion of the Chinese Canadian restaurant menu, the Chinese Canadian restaurant menu specifically names a series of dishes as Canadian or Western. More than that, "Canadian" is often used interchangeably with "Western." I want to suggest that one margin of possibility for locating Chinese diasporic agency in Canada lies in the way in which Chinese cooks and restaurateurs name and define Canadian and western for Canadians. The question is not so much what exactly is Canadian about hamburgers and fries, but what it means for this version of Canadianness to circulate with such persistence through the Chinese restaurant. After all, what does it mean that the Chinese restaurant has become the defining locus of Canadian?

In his essay "Steak and Chips" in Mythologies, Roland Barthes gestures towards a way of reading the semiotics of food and national culture. For Barthes, an "item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies" ("Psychosociology" 21). Reviewing the story of General de Castries' first meal after the armistice in what is now Vietnam, Barthes associates chips, *les frites*, with Frenchness:

> [C]hips are nostalgic and patriotic like steak. *Match* told us that after the armistice in Indo-China '*General de Castries, for his first meal, asked for chips*'… the General's request was certainly not a vulgar materialistic reflex, but an episode in the ritual of appropriating the regained French community. The General understood well our national symbolism; he knew that *la frite*, chips, are the alimentary sign of Frenchness. (63-4)

Barthes' description of the Frenchness of *frites* links the alimentary sign not only to French culture, but also to a moment of French colonialism and nationalism. Chips function in this story to signify and consolidate French power on foreign and colonized soil. Even in Indo-China, the general will have his steak and chips. As Keya Ganguly notes in her consideration of the diasporic and postcolonial politics of food,

> [n]ot only does Barthes's parodic take on alimentary investments expose the patriotic zeal about food matters to be ideological in the same way as are political pamphlets or advertisements; more pointedly, he highlights something singularly "mythological" with respect to the French for which we can find no equivalent within Indian culture, diasporic or otherwise. (125)

Ganguly's reading of the mythological import of the French fry emphasizes the possible role of food in iconography of ideology and power. Observing the "basic, muscular, efficient" imagery which chips signal, Ganguly argues that "unlike effete 'exotic cooking,' steak and chips connotes something of a work ethic; like their imperial counterparts elsewhere, the French know how to get down to the business of ruling… Whereas the commonplace about food is that one eats to live, it appears that the Frenchman eats to rule" (126-7). And yet a few decades after the French general's meal in Indochina, when the idea of French food became ironically synonymous in the West with the effete exoticism of *haute cuisine*,[19] on the contemporary Chinese Canadian restaurant menu, *les frites*, French fries, have somehow become an integral part of what is understood as Canadian.

In placing the French fry, what had been no less than a singularly mythological symbol of French colonial power, under the category of "Canadian," the Chinese restaurant menu does more than simply gesture towards an increasingly homogenized fast food culture. The French fry's migration from French national symbol to that of a staple of what is labeled Canadian on the menu gestures towards one way in which Chinese restaurateurs serve back to Europe-in-Canada their own ideas about westernness. The interchangeability of "Canadian" and "Western" on the menu is neither accidental nor innocent. The collusion between Canadian and Western situates the idea of Canada within the terrain of westernness, something which stands in stark opposition to the plural and multicultural visions of Canadian nationalism which have been such a significant part of post 1970s Canada. Of course, the idea of western is a relative one both geographically and ideologically. But in the case of the menus, what is Canadian is not only associated with a trajectory of western European culture, it is also explicitly not Chinese. The back of the Club Café menu (see fig. 3) situates the "Western Favorites" directly across from "Suggestions for Chinese Dinner." The Bacon Cheeseburger is all that the combination "(A) Dinner for 1: Pineapple Chicken Balls OR Sweet and Sour Shrimps With Chicken Fried Rice 6.00" is not. As the set up of the menu suggests, Chinese food is not only the antithesis of "Western" food, it will never be. Separated by the law of the conjunction where a "Chinese & Western Smorg" could never plausibly be collapsed into "Western Smorg," the logic of a westernness which depends upon the Chinese on the other side of the conjunction emerges as a repetition of the logic of exclusion.

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[19] In The Last Days of Haute Cuisine, Patric Kuh traces the arrival of the concept of haute cuisine in North America to a reclaimed landfill site in the borough of Queens, New York, 1939. Very briefly, from the first chapter of Kuh's book, the story goes like this: This was the site of the French Pavilion of the 1939 World's Fair. Where the English brought the Magna Carta (which, needless to say, was largely ignored), the French brought a four-hundred seat restaurant, Le Pavillon de France. The restaurant was run by a hand-picked, government-supported team of restaurant staff culled from some of the most famous restaurants in France. The pavilion opened with a gala dinner for dignitaries. The menu that night began with *Double Consommé de Viveur served with Paillette Dorés* – a dish that would be translated in the Times the next day as "'Chicken consomme with twisted cheese sticks'" (Kuh 10). Although the restaurant began with the markings of exclusivity, the restaurant served 18, 401 meals to the average fairgoer; in the second month, 26, 510 people had a meal at Le Pavillon de France (Kuh 11). In 1940, the maître d'hôtel, Henri Soulé, ended up back in New York by order of the French prime minister and finally opened up Le Pavillon, his own restaurant, in 1941. These were the first days of *haute cuisine* in North America. For a more detailed account, please see Kuh p. 1-35.

In the accepted view of Chinese immigration in Canada, critics have pointed to the ways in which the head tax and exclusion laws indicate a legacy of legal racism where the Canadian state defined itself over and against Chinese.[20] That is, Canada is not

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[20] Peter Li situates the exclusion of Chinese immigrants from Canada's vision of itself within economic terms where state-sanctioned ideological racism supports and complements economic desires: "Thus an ideology defining a racial group as unassimilable and inferior becomes useful, and indeed necessary, to rationalize racial exploitation. This explanation suggests that institutional racism against the Chinese was a structural imperative at a time when pioneer industries depended on cheap casual labour" (Li 38). In the U.S. context, Lisa Lowe takes up this point, arguing that "[i]n the last

Chinese. This idea of the need for Canada to maintain its national homogeneity through the legal exclusion of supposedly non-assimilable racialized groups is not new. What is different about the menus is that they repeat a racist rationalization of their own exclusion.

Remembering that it is Chinese cooks and restaurateurs who have developed these menus, there are two ways to read this embedding of Canadian racist rationales of exclusion. The first would be that these Chinese immigrants have internalized the rationale of racism and this internalization has emerged in the production of the menu. This is a painful reading which suggests that the work of institutional racism has been thorough in producing subjects that will act within the realms of their own inferiority. In sociological work on race, this is what has been identified as the damage hypothesis where the damage done to racialized subjects over a period of time produces an "inferiority complex" or the idea of "white preference."[21] However, I am not sure that

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century and a half, the Amercian *citizen* has been defined over and against the Asian *immigrant*, legally, economically, and culturally" (4). In the first chapter of Asian/American, David Palumbo Liu extends Lowe's argument to a discussion of the way in which the exclusion of Asian Americans haunts conceptions of U.S. citizenship. See also Yen Le Espiritu's Asian American Men and Women p. 9.

[21] In her work on the idea of racial grief, The Melancholy of Race, Anne Anlin Cheng begins by giving a brief history of the damage hypothesis and tracing several decades of social pyschological work wich focuses particularly on racial damage experienced by children of color. Cheng begins with the 1930s experiments of Kenneth and Mamie Clark where they found that the vast majority of black children, given the choice, preferred to play with white dolls, identifying them as "good," rather than black dolls which the children often referred to as "bad." The Clark dolls tests came to be important evidence in the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education case which ended the segregated school system in the U.S. The Clark doll tests have been contested in subsequent years but, as Cheng notes, the pain which the tests highlighted has not gone away: "Racial ideals continue to drive those most oppressed by it. Even market researchers have become invested in this question of racial preference… the toy giant Mattel, who spent millions of dollars in market research and new product development only to find… what Kenneth Clark could have told them nearly fifty years ago: that African American (and other ethnic) children

this is the only or the most productive way of reading what appears to be the repetition of the rhetoric of racial exclusion on the Chinese restaurant menu.

My reason for this lies in my sense that the crucial work of grieving and thinking through the effects of racial damage is an internal – both in the sense of being internal to a racialized community and internal to the racialized individual – investigation. I will return to considerations of damage, grief and loss in the final chapter of this project. For now, in this specific consideration of the menu, I will stay within the realm of a more externalized negotiation where the menus are a means through which Chinese Canadian subjects have negotiated the precariousness of being both minority and residually migrant. Within this negotiation, let me read the Chinese restaurant menu's presentation of whiteness in Canada somewhat naively and then move to what I hope will be an enabling reading.

Let's take it as a given that menus are about attracting business. Given the isolated existence of the restaurants where there tends to be only one in every town, this business is invariably white. The logic of the menus is then primarily that of attracting white consumers and making them want to come to the restaurant. Within this simplistic narrative of consumer demand, we can trace the embedding of a highly aware and agential representational praxis that is all about negotiating and alleviating the perceived threat of their otherness. These are texts of survival. For example, the 1950s Diamond Grill menu (see fig. 4), the first menu in my archive where Chinese food appears, exists

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given the chance, would rather play with a blond, blue-eyed Barbie than dolls that 'looked more like themselves'"(Cheng 6). Arguing that "[t]he connection between subjectivity and social damage needs to be formulated in terms more complicated than either resigning colored people to the irrevocability of 'self-hatred' or denying racism's profound, lasting effects" Cheng turns to exploring the idea of racial grief (7).

against the backdrop of the end of Exclusion in 1947.[22] The menu's echoing of the logic of racist exclusion where Chinese is not Canadian needs to be read within a rubric of a highly self-conscious self-positioning. Inhabiting the precarious space of diasporic subjectivity means that there is necessarily a moment when you anticipate what is expected of you, of your body as it moves through space, of your language as you communicate to others, of your vision of the host country where you should be grateful for a space within reach of the comforts of advanced capitalism in the first world. The establishment of a Canadian menu which is explicitly not Chinese is an act of agential self-positioning.

Within this agential self-positioning, we can read the way in which Chinese cooks served back to Europe-in-Canada a narrative of Canada's own national emergence. Returning to where I began in this section, let me now suggest that Chinese cooks have stepped in and named a national food culture for Canadians by negotiating the presentation of their continuing exclusion. I have studied the general organization of the menus. Now let me step back and formally explore the menu as a whole.

The history of the menu tells us that the form of the menu is intimately related to that of the novel and the newspaper. Following from that relation, the menu needs to be read as a formal manifestation of print culture closely tied to the narrative of a national imagined community. Along with Anderson's linking of the novel and the newspaper, the menu can be thought of as a textual form which helped to consolidate a particular idea of national culture. Like the novel and the newspaper, the menu benefited from the rise of mass print capitalism in the eighteenth century. Rebecca Sprang's work in The Invention of the Restaurant suggests a close connection between conceptions of French culture and the French restaurant menu in the eyes of others. Drawing on the doubled meaning of *la carte* – the map and the menu – Sprang notes that the menu provided a tangible, bound, iconic space in which to imagine the space of the nation (192-193). "French 'national character' revealed itself to foreign tourists in the dining rooms of Paris restaurants. 'Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are,' wrote Brillat-Savarin in 1826…" (197). The *carte*, the map, the menu, remains with us as one of the primary means by which food is represented, textualized, as a metonym of the boundaries of the nation.[23]

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[22] What has been known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, formally, the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, was repealed in 1947. Chinese immigrants were the only immigrant

The menu as we now know it – a printed object, often folded in quarto or as a small booklet, with a list of the restaurant's offerings and the prices next to them – is intimately related to the history of European literary innovation. Exploring the

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group to be targetted with legal exclusion. For an extended discussion of the Exclusion Act, see the chapter on exclusion in Wickberg.

[23] Although I am making a claim about the overlap between the menu, the map and the nation, I am not suggesting that this is the making of a national cuisine in the sense that Arjun Appadurai has established in his work on Indian cookbooks. Also, depending on a textualized reading of food through the menu, my discussion departs from work of social anthropologists who have written extensively about the relationship between food and ethnic or national identity. In this work, much of which focuses on the ideas of foodways, the analyses emerge from interviews and participant observational work rather than reading the representation of food through a text such as a menu. Writers draw out the ways in which communities, usually racially or ethnically defined communities, mark out their differences through food, retain a sense of an ethnic identity (constructed or otherwise) and perform ethnic identity. I am thinking in particular of Susan Kalcik's "Ethnic Foodways in America" and Richard Raspa's "Exotic Foods among Italian-Americans in Mormon Utah." Raspa, for example, argues that "[p]reparing exotic food [i.e. goat's head] allow[s] the performers to recreate their ethnic identity, maintain traditional boundaries with dominant culture, and nurture familial closeness" (193). The work on foodways constitutes a significant body of knowledge in social anthropological work and largely focuses on food prepared for consumption within the private sphere of the home and community. In contrast, this project dwells on food served in public space, prepared by Chinese cooks for non-Chinese consumers.

development of the restaurant through print culture, Sprang traces the changes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French menus with the innovations in French literary production:

> The shape and appearance of menus changed considerably during the nineteenth century, but each new format was shared by every place that was 'a restaurant.' The menu's layout consistently mimicked the century's typographic innovations: first a single large folio, packed with columns of closely printed type; then a small booklet, leather-covered and bound with silken cord; then again a single sheet, hand-decorated with languid goddesses and stylized flowers. Thus, while the early menus looked like the newspapers of the Consulate and the first Empire, mid-nineteenth-century menus resembled fat realist novels, and those of the Belle Époque, poster art. The menu kept pace with the era's literary production because it was itself a sort of literary product, the restaurant's most marked – and marking – generic innovation. (Sprang 188-89)

The development of the menu follows the trajectory of the rise of other major eighteenth-century literary forms – the novel and the newspaper. In the imaginary community of a dining public, the production of the menu as a text whose typography and form adopted an increasingly stable structure helped to stabilize the restaurant as a distinct industry. The introduction of a printed menu marked one of the most significant moments in the invention of the western restaurant. In eighteenth-century France, the printed menu distinguished the restaurant from other public eating establishments such as inns or cafes, and standardized what would become an industry. "Before restaurants could be distinguished from one another, they first had to be separated from all other eateries, and the highly standardized menu structure did just that, making a number of businesses into a specific sort of cultural institution"(Sprang 189). Although the eighteenth-century French restaurants of Sprang's study are far removed from the Chinese restaurants of this discussion, both institutions nonetheless share a name and a genealogy. The menu, like the novel, reflected the changes in European typographic traditions.

Through the form of the menu, Chinese diasporic subjects re-code Canadian settler colonial discourse. A formal consideration of the menu gestures to the way in which Chinese restaurateurs have seized a specifically European, French in this case, restaurant convention and used it as a means of reproducing and disseminating Chineseness while defining the idea of Canada for Canadians.

Sprang's connection between the menu and the novel brings us back to some of the earliest work in postcolonial studies where the empire wrote back to the center by seizing imperial tools.[24] The postcolonial novel wrote back and re-wrote the novel, the generic literary form that consolidated an entire European literary tradition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The diasporic Chinese menu functions also as a seizure of a form of cultural representation.

However, the standardization of burgers and fries as typical offerings on the Canadian side of the Chinese Canadian restaurant menu is a relatively recent occurrence. Turning to a menu from the 1950s, we can see that hamburgers and French fried potatoes are a very small part of a multitude of non-Chinese food offerings (see fig. 4). Unlike contemporary menus which mark the categories of Chinese and Canadian or Western explicitly, the Diamond Grill menu of the 1950s does not name its non-Chinese dishes as

Canadian or Western. The non-Chinese food offerings are plentiful and diverse going far beyond hamburgers to include seemingly more sophisticated dishes such as "Lyonnaise Potatoes," "Fresh Cracked Crab en Mayonnaise," "Lobster a la Newburg," and "Waldorf Salad." In contrast, the Chinese food offerings almost seem like an afterthought, tacked on at the end of the menu, after the listing of the beverages and just before the Fountain menu. Small town restaurants operated by Chinese people did not always serve Chinese food. In the 1920s when New Dayton was a thriving small town that had not yet been swallowed up by Lethbridge, Charlie Chew's New Dayton Café did not serve any Chinese food at all[25] (see fig. 5). Even though the New Dayton Café was clearly a restaurant operated by a Chinese migrant, like the Diamond Grill, it does not declare itself to be a Chinese restaurant, much less a Chinese and Canadian one. Moreover, there is almost no consistency between the 1923 menu of the New Dayton, the 1950s menu of the Diamond Grill and that of contemporary restaurants such as the Club Café or the Parkview. The westernness of the menu constantly shifts, re-inventing itself throughout the period of this sample.

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[24] See Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin's The Empire Writes Back, and Ania Loomba's chapter, "Colonialism and Literature" in Colonialism/Postcolonialism.

[25] Although the Provincial Archives of Alberta does not have a date for the New Dayton menu, I have dated the menu to the 1920s. In conversation with archivists at the Galt Museum in Lethbridge, Alberta, we have agreed that this is a reasonable approximation of the time period of this menu. According to a publication of the New Dayton Historical Society, Hoy Fat Leong came to New Dayton in 1917 with his son Charlie Chew Leong. They bought land from Jim Reid and then operated the first café in New Dayton. In 1923, the café was destroyed by fire. Charlie Chew re-built the café with four tables, stools, a glass counter and modern gas lamps (a big improvement on the old kerosene ones). The menu we now have which includes items such as pastries which could be displayed at a glass counter and ice cream sodas would have been part of the menu of the re-built New Dayton Café. Also, the menu names "C.L. Chew" as the proprietor and not Charlie's father, Hoy Fat Leong.

In the menus that we have, from 1923 to the present, the food offerings under the category of Canadian or Western serve back a narrative of Canada's development through various forms of capitalism. On the relatively simple short order and fountain menu of the New Dayton Café the interests of early Canadian agricultural and railway interests dominate the offerings (see fig. 5). The phone number is a single digit and the bill of fare is equally basic. The New Dayton menus consists largely of canned food and simple sandwiches. The most exotic or foreign-sounding offerings are not Chinese dishes but rather the Mexican-inflected items: Chili Con Carne and Tamales. Long before the incursions of the fast food's Taco Bell (where you still can't get a tamale), in 1923 New Dayton, a town that no longer exists, you could get a tamale in small town southern Alberta. These Mexican influences on the menu are not surprising when you keep in mind the trajectory of migrant Chinese labour. Not only did they come across the Pacific, but also up from the mines and railways of California.

Compared to the simplicity of the New Dayton, the Diamond Grill's vision of a short order menu is lush and sophisticated. The wealth of the Diamond's western food offerings reflects the boom economy of post-World War Two Canada. The Diamond Grill's four page menu is crammed with offerings. The number of menu items alone is staggering compared to the menu of the New Dayton. There are twenty-five kinds of "Diamond Grill Choice Steaks and Chops," twenty-five kinds of "Eggs or Omelettes," twenty-nine kinds of "Sandwiches" and over forty-nine fountain menu offerings. Reflecting the increasing prevalence of manufactured food, the breakfast offerings list a number of brand name cereals which are still with us today and connected to some of the largest multinational food producers in North American – Rice Krispies, Grape Nuts, All

Bran, Shredded Wheat. The modernity of the Diamond Grill is distinctly steeped in the economic shifts and changes of 1950s North America.

Finally, on the contemporary menus, the Canadian or Western food items, reduced largely to variations of hamburgers and fries, are the culinary embodiment of late capitalist streamlined efficiency. As recent work on the politics of fast food demonstrates, the hamburger signals an entire economic shift. Ester Reiter notes that the growth and development of the fast food industry in Canada, following the patterns in the United States, marks a major shift towards the commercialization of domestic labour. The production of the hamburger in North America is part of a growing oligopolic model of industrialization which is premised on a notion of "the interchangeable worker." It signals a change in the organization of domestic labour where more and more North Americans, dine out for the sake of dining (Reiter 165). Moving from the issue of labor to that of culture, David Bell and Gill Valentine connect fast food to an increasing homogenization of culture where "the line between dependability and monotony" is a fine one (135). In culinary terms, the hamburger exemplifies a late capitalist economic situation where flexible labour and the homogenization of a particular global culture are indicators of new regimes of capital accumulation.

Turning back to the Chinese restaurant menu, the reduction of the non-Chinese items on the Chinese restaurant menu to variations of hamburgers and fries suggests that the menu reflects the changes in Canadian economic development without actually changing the ways in which the restaurant actually operates. Retaining the essence of the "mom and pop" businesses that Reiter notes as the pre-cursor to the invasion of the franchised fast food industry in Canada, the restaurants take up the changes in the industry but do not fall into the destructive rhythms of the fast food industry where labour is increasingly so unskilled as to be interchangeable. Hamburger and fries may be iconic of the fast food industry but their appearance does not necessarily change the rhythm of the Chinese restaurant's long-established short order formula. Chinese cooks adapt and adopt the menu, but are outside of the rhythm of typical fast food production. This difference in the temporality of the Chinese restaurant is something that I want to return to in the last section of this chapter. In this section, what I want to emphasize is the absorptive power of the Chinese restaurant menu. The menus adopt the fast food under the rubric of "Canadian" food and adapt to shifting culinary desires while sustaining a sense of the Chinese restaurant's coherence and consistency. Maintaining the Chinese restaurant as an institution on the main streets of small towns, the restaurant menu moves from tamales to Potatoes Lyonnaise to hamburgers, serving back to Canada culinary icons of its own economic shifts.

Within this shifting westernness of the menu items, the pedagogical time of Canadianness emerges on the menu. Like a novel progressing through the empty national time of Canadian nationhood, the Canadian menu grows into itself. In the clocked and calendrical temporality of Canada's surfacing into nationhood, the story of national emergence can be read in the simultaneity of its progressive shifts from the simple short order and fountain menu of the New Dayton, to the full and impressive selection at the Diamond, and then to its streamlined modernity at the Golden Wheel.

Chinese Food: Reproducing Chineseness

Let me begin my consideration of the Chinese food on the menu by taking for granted that the Chineseness of the Chinese restaurant menu needs to be read as highly constructed. Despite the promises of "authentic Chinese food," let me assume that the construction of Chineseness on the menu is one that is acutely self-conscious and at least partially aware of the ramifications of its constructions. This allows us to shift the weight of the discussion away from questions of authenticity and towards the problem of the dissemination of particular narratives of "authentic Chinese food." Rather than asking whether or not sweet and sour pork or chicken chop suey might qualify as "real" or "fake" Chinese food,[26] the question then becomes what I take to be a more pressing one:

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[26] In "On Not Speaking Chinese," Ien Ang sets the up the problem "real" and "fake" Chineseness by relating it to an anecdote about Chinese food. Ang opens with a description of a one-day trip to China and the pain of her experience of wanting to identify and not identify with the kinds of Chineseness which she confronts. This experience of simultaneous alientation from and interpellation into Chineseness culminates in a scene at a restaurant. Let me take a minute to revisit it. She writes:

> We were served lunch in a huge, rather expensive-looking restaurant complete with fake Chinese temple and a pond with lotus flowers in the garden, undoubtedly designed with pleasing international visitors in mind, but paradoxically only preposterous in its stereotypicality. All twelve of us, members of the tourist group, were seated around a typically Chinese round-table. Lan-lan [the tourist guide] did not join us, and I think I know why. The food we were served was obviously the kind of Chinese food that was adapted to European taste: familiar, rather bland dishes… not the "authentic" Cantonese delicacies I was subconsciously looking forward to now that I was in China. (Wrong assumption: you have to be in rich, decadent, capitalist Hong Kong for that, as I found out.) And we did not get a bowl and chopsticks, but a plate with spoon and fork. I was shocked, even though my chopstick competence is not great. An instant sense of alienation took hold of me. Part of me wanted to leave immediately, wanted to scream out loud that I didn't belong to the group I was with, but another part of me felt compelled to take Lan-lan's place as tourist guide while she was not with us, to explain, as best I could, to my fellow tourists what the food was all about. I realized how mistaken I was to assume, since there is a Chinese restaurant in virtually every corner of the world, that "everybody knows Chinese food." For my table companions the unfamiliarity of the experience prevailed, the anxious excitement of trying something new (although they

How does the Chineseness of the menu circulate? What does the menu as a text of counterculture reveal about the way in which some diasporic subjects have negotiated their otherness in the precariousness of migrancy?

In this section, I want to look at the ways in which Chinese cooks and restaurateurs produce and define a particular kind of Chineseness for Euro-Canadian consumption. If, as the preceding section has argued, they produce and define a Canadianness which explicitly excludes the category of Chinese, how can we read the presentation of Chineseness on the menus? The current critical canon on the representation of minority and postcolonial subjects falls into two general camps. On the one hand, oppressed subjects are subjected to stereotypical representations and on the other those subjects represent themselves. Either you are represented by power, or, in the agential casting of the question, you take power and represent yourself. In Asian American literary criticism, for example, this has emerged in the conjoining of two lines of arguments: Through mechanisms such as immigration and labor laws, U.S. citizenship defined itself over and against Asian identities;[27] and in the cultural work of Asian Americans, and here literature has perhaps the most substantial body of critical reflection

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> predictably found the duck skin 'too greasy', of course, the kind of complaint about Chinese food that I have heard so often from Europeans). (3)

I have quoted Ang at length because she nicely sets a series of binaries which attend to the problem of Chineseness – fake vs. authentic, outside vs. inside, tourist vs. native, fork and spoon vs. chopsticks and a bowl. These are binaries which persist throughout discussions of Chineseness. The problem of assimilation versus non-assimilation emerges for Ang in the scene of the restaurant and the serving of a Chineseness back to her in the form of fake Chinese food on a plate accompanied by a fork and a spoon.

[27] See Lisa Lowe's Chapter 1, "Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization" in Immigrant Acts. See also Yen Le Espiritu's Asian American Men and Women p. 9.

behind it, Asian Americans represent themselves.[28] This agential-self representation is generally cast in terms of countering damaging stereotypes and fighting for a vision of Asian American identity which is free of ideological racism. Yen Le Espiritu summarizes this double movement observing that

> categories of difference, race and gender relations do not parallel but intersect and confirm each other, and it is the complicity among these categories of difference that enables U.S. elites to justify their cultural, social and economic power. Responding to the ideological assaults on their gender identities, Asian Amercian cultural workers have engaged in a wide range of oppositional projects to defend Asian American manhood and womanhood. (106-7)

In Asian Canadian critical work, similar kinds of arguments have emerged. Exploring the work of anthologies, Lien Chao observes that the publication of Asian Canadian anthologies such as Inalienable Rice and Many-Mouthed Birds signify "the collective and social advancement and cultural development of contemporary Chinese Canadians in society" (165). Similarly, Glen Deer argues that "[t]he diversity of Asian North-American writers must always be re-asserted against the stereotypes of the public imagination" (14). The issue of negative stereotypes of Chinese Canadians is a continuing general concern in Maria Ng's essays, "Chop Suey Writing" and

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[28] This is far and away not an exhaustive list and I recognize that I have simplified the many complex interventions that have been made in these texts regarding the work of Asian American literature for the sake of drawing out the larger contours of the discussion. I am thinking for example of: Elaine Kim's Asian American Literature; Chapter 5 of Yen Le Espiritu's Asian American Men and Women, "Ideological Racism and Cultural Resistance: Constructing our own images"; Sau-Ling Wong's Reading Asian American Literature; Chapter 5 of Lisa Lowe's Immigrant Acts "Decolonization, Displacement, Disidentification: Writing and the Question of History." In terms of

"Representing Chinatown: Dr. Fu Manchu at the Disappearing Moon Café." Roy Miki closes the "Asiancy" chapter of Broken Entries with a hopeful call for Asian Canadian self-representation where

> writers from a diversity of subject-positions can develop the conditions in which social justice can be achieved through language free from the tyranny of hegemonies of all kinds… where writers of color, including Asian Canadian writers, can negotiate their (non-totalizable) specificities – without looking over their shoulders for the coercive gaze of homogenizing discourses. (123)

Miki's hopefulness looks forward to a space where Asian Canadian writing is free from the coercions of a backward glance. Miki's backward glance forcefully echos Althusser's famous turning back towards power, the interpellation of the subject by the policeman's hailing (Althusser 174). Perhaps, however, we might read for an agency within that backward glance that exceeds the project of countering of negative stereotypes.

Remembering that there is another language of emplacement, another register outside of Anglophone Canada's hailing of the Chinese subject, perhaps, there is a mode of self-representation where the coercions of the backward glance are anticipated and produced within the mode of that anticipation. This anticipation is partly Judith Butler's point in The Psychic Life of Power. The paradox of interpellation is that, in order to be interpellated, individuals must already recognize themselves as subjects to be interpellated. Catching Althusser on the very temporal progression he depends upon but

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anthologies, I have in mind work such as Shirley Lim and Mayumi Tsutakawa's The Forbidden Stitch and Amy Ling's Yellow Light.

then attempts to discount,[29] Butler asks, "What, prior to the subject accounts for its formation?" (117). She then proceeds to point out the paradox of interpellation:

> Althusser begins "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" by referring to the reproduction of social relations, specified by referring to the reproduction of social skills. He then distinguishes between skills produced in the firm and those reproduced in education. The subject is formed with respect to the latter. In a sense, this reproduction of relations is prior to the subject who is formed in its course. Yet the two cannot, strictly speaking, be thought of without each other. (Butler 117)

However, where Butler's analysis then turns to the problem of desire, my analysis pulls this problem of the prior into one of racial formation. That is, the question of what it means to hail a racialized subject elicits the knowledge that, prior to the subject's formation, there is a distinctly different body of knowledge already circulating for that subject. In the production of Chineseness on the restaurant menus, I read a representation of Chineseness which situates the project of "representing ourselves" within a highly strategic mode.

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[29] Although Butler does not make this specific reading regarding temporal succession in Althusser, we can already see in his text the attempt to justify the dependance on temporal progress which he then, only a few lines later, tries to suppress. Describing the scene of the hailing, Althusser writes, "Naturally for the convenience and clarity of my little theoretical theatre I have had to present things in the form of a sequence, with a before and an after, and thus in the form of a temporal succession" (174). He then illustrates the now famous scene of the individual who "turns round, believing/suspecting/knowing that it is for him, i.e. recognizing that 'it really is he' who is meant by the hailing. *But in reality these things happen without any succession.* The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing" (175 my emphasis). Althusser's initial rationalizing belies the paradox of the argument. Ostensibly, Althusser describes the scene in terms of temporal succession only for the sake of clarity. However, this one and the same of the existence of ideology and the interpellation of the subject into ideology then belies the necessity of the subject already anticipating the interpellation prior to the act. There is, despite Althusser's attempt to "suppress the temporal form in which" he has presented the scene

In the previous section, I argued that the Chinese restaurant menu serves back to Europe-in-Canada a narrative of its own nationness. That is, the menu's bold declaration of what Canadian food is presents to Europe-in-Canada a tradition, however obviously invented, of its own. Following from that, I argue that the Chinese portion of the menu complements the Canadian one by serving up a highly self-conscious stereotypical Chineseness which nonetheless produces anxiety through the mechanical reproduction of the menu.

Unlike the western dishes on the menus, the Chinese dishes have changed relatively little since their first appearance on the 1950s Chinese Canadian restaurant menu. The contemporary menus' offerings of Chinese food may be more numerous than those at the Diamond Grill, but they read as merely variations on the same reliable basics that the Diamond Grill offered. Turning to the back of the menu to the "Diamond Grill Special Chinese Dishes," you will encounter Chicken Chop Suey and Rice first on the list (see fig. 4). At the Diamond, you could get one kind of chop suey. At the Golden Wheel, there are five to choose from – Vegetable, BBQ Pork, Chicken, Beef, and Shrimp. Different, and yet basically the same. In the Chinese portion of the menu, the performative time of Canadian nationhood emerges through the menu's mechanical reproduction of a particular stereotype of Chineseness.

Although chop suey is a dish that has become iconic of inauthentic Chinese food, let me take seriously the Chineseness of chop suey and consider it as a sign of

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to us, always, as Butler notes, a moment prior to the hailing in which the subject is

Chineseness under negotiation through reproduction. The Diamond Grill menu explicitly names chop suey as Chinese. In that naming, the menu textualizes Chineseness, providing a medium through which Chineseness can be reproduced and disseminated. As Sprang notes, menus develop in dialogue with one another – one restaurant will copy another's. In this process of pilfering and printing, a standardized restaurant cuisine emerges.

> As restaurateurs (and café-keepers) copied and reused menus, they disseminated a specialized terminology to a wider and wider audience. Insofar as very similar texts, if not exactly the same dishes, were available in a wide variety of eateries, names could spread semi-independently of that to which they had once referred… The menu, by fixing names and titles, both addressed the fantasy and further created the expectation of identity and uniformity. Eaters were not meant to be uniform, but the eaten was, and if it was not, then differences ought to be understood and apparent, capable of being erected into a taxonomy. (191-192)

The print menu has helped to standardize what we have come to know as Chinese food. The menu develops dialogically, one copying another, one menu echoing the offerings of another one in an entirely different location. The menu is not only a record of displacement but also one of emplacement – it puts into place a kind of Chineseness which persists through the dissemination of the menu.

In Sour Sweet, Timothy Mo fictionalized this strategy of disseminating a highly constructed Chineseness for non-Chinese consumption. Playing on the notion of

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formed.

stereotypical Chinese food for westerners, and the dialogic development of the menu, Mo describes the food that Chen and Lily serve at the take-away they have just established:

> The food they served, certainly wholesome, nutritious, even tasty in its way, had been researched by Chen… They served from a stereotyped menu, similar to those outside countless other establishments in the UK. The food was, if nothing else, thought Lily, provenly successful: English tastebuds must be as degraded as their care of their parents; it could, of course, be part of a scheme of cosmic repercussion. "Sweet and sour pork" was their staple, naturally; batter musket balls encasing a tiny core of meat, laced with a scarlet sauce that had an interesting effect on the urine of the consumer the next day. Chen knew because he tried some and almost fainted with shock the morning after, fearing some frightful internal hemorrhaging (had Lily been making him overdo it lately?) and going round with a slight limp until in the mid-afternoon the stream issued clear as ever. "Spare ribs" (whatever they were) also seemed popular. So were spring rolls, basically a Northerner's snack, which Lily parsimoniously filled mostly with bean sprouts. All to be packed in the rectangular silver boxes, food coffins, to be removed and consumed statutorily off-premises. (105-6)

Of course, Chen and Lily's take-away is not quite the same as small town Chinese restaurants in Canada. But Mo's humorous take on the standards (both in the sense of typicality and quality) of Chinese food on the menu suggests that they come out of an anticipation of western expectations. If nothing else, the food is "provenly successful." One of the things that this passage draws out so nicely is the relationship between the reproduction of the menu in dialogue with other menus, and the awareness of the production of a menu that is unquestionably stereotypical.

The standardization of Chinese dishes produces a soothing sameness in the representation of Chineseness on the menu. Just as you can walk into any small town in Canada and expect to find a Chinese restaurant, you can sit down at any one of these restaurants, open the menu and find chop suey. Chop suey's representation of Chineseness produces a fixity and stability in the Chineseness in Canada. Meditating on the colonial stereotype, Homi Bhabha notes in "The Other Question" that one of the hallmarks of racial stereotypes is that of a fixity of representation:

> The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference… constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations. (75)

The Chineseness represented on the menu functions within a persistent kind of stereotypicality. In the glowing artificiality of the red sauce for sweet and sour pork, there is a phantasmatic fixity to the representation of Chineseness on the menu. While the egg foo yong or the chow mein might be different from one restaurant to another, they nonetheless use the same names for their dishes. Walking into the Parkview Restaurant in Thorhild, Alberta, a diner could reasonably expect to eat the same Lemon Chicken that they would eat at the Golden Wheel in Ponoka, Alberta. The expectation of a kind of sameness, a regularity to the experience of the menu speaks not only to the rise of the Chinese restaurant as an institution, but also to the institutionalization of a kind of standardized Chineseness disseminated through the menus of Chinese restaurants across the landscape of western Canada. Looking at the menus across a span of geographical space, they *are* remarkably similar. They are organized the same way, they have the same categories of food items (appetizers, soup, chop suey, chow mein, egg foo yong and so on). They are structured along the lines of similar culinary expectations.

However, unlike colonial texts, the menus are texts where the fixing occurs by those who are stereotyped. The Diamond Grill menu, for example, fixes and names the category of Chinese. The menu institutionalizes the category of Chinese through items such as chop suey and chicken chow mein. This standardized sameness creates a language of Chineseness which functions as a different textualization circulating within Canadian culture. At once at the margins of culture, disparately spread out over vast geographies and away from urban centers, the consistency of the menus nonetheless asserts a pervasive Chineseness which departs from the definitions of Chinese perpetuated in Canadian law.[30]

As Bhabha usefully argues, a critique cannot be located at the level of whether or not good or bad stereotypes are being perpetuated; rather, it needs to be centered around the process of subjectification itself (75). In that sense, it would not be enough simply to say that an apparatus such as the restaurants produce counter-stereotypes which challenge the "negative" ones of a Euro-Canadian regime. And yet, in the case of the stereotypical Chineseness produced by Chinese restaurateurs on the menus, Chinese diaspora subjects are producing and perpetuating Chinese stereotypes. These are not necessarily "positive" stereotypes that have been put into circulation. In fact, the images in circulation eerily echo the projections of the dominant culture. In that sense, they are actually serving back to power precisely its own projection. The unsettling moment happens not in the production of a stereotypical trope (fake Chinese food, the Chinese cook) but in the reproduction of the eerily familiar coming from the other.

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[30] See my "Re-reading Head Tax Racism."

There is an excessiveness to the representation in the Chineseness on the Chinese restaurant menu. It is so simple, so uncomplicated, so palatable in that it is exactly what whiteness might expect of Chineseness. This staging of difference contests the ambivalence of colonial power because it exploits that ambivalence. And so the sameness.

> The process by which the metaphoric 'masking is inscribed on a lack which must then be concealed gives the stereotype both its fixity and its phantasmatic quality – the *same old* stories of the Negro animality, the Coolie's inscrutability, or the stupidity of the Irish *must* be told (compulsively) again and afresh, and are differently gratifying and terrifying each time. (Bhabha 77)

Yet, it is the Chinese diasporic subject who re-tells the same old story. It is the subject of settler colonial dominance who facilitates, through the space of the restaurant and the text of the restaurant menu, the compulsive return to the stereotype. It is comforting because it anticipates projected desires. It is exactly what you ordered, what you wanted, given back to you. It fulfills the colonial hunger for itself; they consume their own projection.

The menu stabilizes a kind of Chineseness which offers its consumer the possibility of a reassuring uniformity not only in the Chinese food on the menu, but also in the Chineseness which Chinese food signifies. Chinese restaurant menus present a comforting, palatable Chineseness which can be reproduced and disseminated through the institution of the restaurant. The Diamond Grill menu presents eight unassuming "Special Chinese Dishes"— items such as Chicken Chop Suey and Rice, Chicken Noodle, Chinese Style, Egg Fooyong and Sweet and Sour Pork Spare Ribs and Rice. The Chinese portion of the menu is very small compared to the restaurant's offerings of more than twenty-five different egg dishes, thirty different sandwiches and thirty-two sundae options. The Chinese food on the menu does not challenge western ones for representational space on the menu, nor does it challenge the non-Chinese diner in terms of its content. The Chinese food items on the Diamond Grill's menu have become standard fare at Chinese restaurants across the prairies. While the contemporary menus have more options, all of the dishes that the Diamond Grill offered are still there. The uniformity of Chinese food on the menus suggests the creation of a uniform Chineseness which could be reproduced, disseminated and identified.

At the same time that the menu names and makes knowable a palatable Chineseness, it also troubles the possibility of fixing an authentic ethnicity. Inherent in the notion of reproduction is the problem of the original. While the menu allows for a mediated form of cultural contact, it also complicates the idea of an authentic or original Chineseness. The apparatus of mechanical reproduction in the printing of the restaurant menu mocks attempts at authenticity. Walter Benjamin argues in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" that mechanical reproduction challenges the idea of authenticity: "From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense" (224). As Eduardo Cadava notes, Benjamin refers not to the fact of reproduction, but to the possibility of reproducibility: "technical reproduction is not an empirical feature of modernity… Rather, it is a structural possibility within the work of art" (42). While Benjamin's critique relates specifically to the work of art, and not to constructions of race and ethnicity, his analysis of authenticity bears tangentially upon this discussion. Benjamin saw in photography the potential deconstruction of "[t]he presumed uniqueness of a production, the singularity of the artwork, and the value of authenticity" (Cadava 44). As Rey Chow argues,

> we need to extend Benjamin's conceptualization, a conceptualization that is ostensibly about objects – works of art and their mechanical reproducation – to human beings. Once we do that, we see that in our fascination with the "authentic native," we are actually engaging in a search for the equivalent of the aura even while our search processes themselves take us farther and farther away from that "original" point of identification. (Writing 46)

While I disagree with Chow's subsequent discussion which suggests that Benjamin's "formulation of communism and fascism in terms of the 'politicization of art' and the 'aestheticization of politics' is actually a reversible one" (Writing 46),[31] she makes a useful connection between the aura of the original work of art and that of the authentic racial other. Because my use of Benjamin is limited to the reproduction of Chineseness on the small town restaurant menu,[32] his analysis of the condition of reproducibility is particularly apt.

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[31] Chow is paraphrasing a talk given by J. Hillis Miller titled "The Work of Cultural Criticism in the Age of Digital Reproduction." She agrees with Miller and observes that "[w]hat Miller means is that what begins as a mobilization for political change is based on an interest in/respect for the cultural differences of our others (the politicization of art) can easily grow into its ugly opposite. That is to say, the promotion of a type of politics that is based on the need to distinguish between 'differences' may consquently lead, as in the case of the Nazis, to an oppression that springs from the transformation of 'difference' into 'superiority'" (Writing 46-7).

It makes no sense to ask for authentic chop suey. We already know that it is a copy of something which is outside the margins of the menu. Any number of chop suey dishes can be produced, but no one is more authentic than another. The reproducibility of Chineseness embodied in the restaurant menu frustrates the construction of a knowable authentic Chinese subject at the same time that it offers up a palatable Chineseness which gives the impression of knowability. As Benjamin observes, reproducibility endangers the authority of the object.

> The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object. (221)

The reproduction of Chineseness on the menu jeopardizes the authority of the Chinese food on the menu to stand in for Chinese – it puts into question the possibility of knowing Chinese authoritatively through the Chinese food on the menu.

In naming Chineseness for the Euro-Canadian community, Chinese food on the restaurant menu brings to the surface the uneasiness of attempts at knowing and identifying otherness. Chow writes of the possibility of the native's gaze reflecting back on the colonizer in the colonial gaze:

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[32] Chow's analysis is focused on the problem of the desire for the authentic racial other in the western academy and she refers to a range of texts including her experience on a hiring committee for a Chinese language and literature specialist at the University of Minnesota, Julia Kristeva's About Chinese Women, and Malek Alloula's The Colonial Harem.

> Contrary to the model of Western hegemony in which the colonizer is seen as a primary, active "gaze" subjugating the native as passive 'object,' I want to suggest that it is actually the colonizer who feels looked at by the native's gaze. This gaze, which is neither a threat nor a retaliation, makes the colonizer 'conscious' of himself, leading him to his need to turn his gaze around and look at himself, hence-forth 'reflected' in the native-object. (Writing 51)

The menu functions on this order, delivering or serving up a palatable Chineseness at the same time that it jeopardizes its own authority as a text of Chineseness. Chinese food on the menu betrays the version of Chineseness which white communities can consume, revealing more about whiteness than Chineseness. More than that, Chineseness on the menu tells us about how Chinese diaspora subjects negotiate the reproduction and dissemination of Chineseness.

The menu attests to a self-conscious and utterly aware production of fictive ethnicity. It functions as a reminder that the racialized other herself might also produce an inauthentic and imperfect Chineseness as a strategy of resistance. The legacy of the menu suggests that Chinese diaspora subjects exploit the menu's capacity for the reproduction of a cultural space in order to produce an ethnicity which can be made palatable and frustrates the desire for an authentic Chineseness.

Slowness and Alternative Temporalities

In this final section, I want to bring together the previous two sections and consider what the pedagogical and performative time of the menu produces. Taking Bhabha's interventionary work in "DissemiNation" to the logic of its conclusions, the diasporic agency which emerges in the splitting of nation time may not lie in a diasporic haunting of the colonial or settler colonial national conscience or consciousness. Perhaps we can end not with the curious ambivalences of the English weather and the gatherings of those who have been scattered in the urban centers of the nation, but with the ways in which dispersal puts into place a politics of incorporation, of embedding within the narrative of the nation. As Bhabha himself argues,

> [t]he minority does not simply confront the pedagogical, or powerful master-discourse with a contradictory or negating referent. It interrogates its object by initially withholding its objective. Insinuating itself into the terms of reference of the dominant discourse, the supplementary antagonizes the implicit power to generalize, to produce sociological solidity. (155)

And yet, the supplementary, the "space of doubling – not plurality – where the image is presence and proxy" may not antagonize the power to generalize just through its challenge to a homogenous sociality (Bhabha 154). Rather, as the Chinese restaurant menus suggest, the minority diasporic subject might produce for power the sociological solidity it desires. And within that production of a narrative of the nation for that nation, the production of Canada for itself, Chinese diasporic subjects don't just insinuate themselves into the dominant discourse, but, as the history of legal exclusion suggests, they are constitutive of it. They emphasize the roots of Canada's national emergence in the routes of diasporic agency. What happens within the split time of the nation if not the production of a disjunctive, alternative temporality which places the European temporality of linear progress out of joint with itself? Let me back up and consider what has emerged in the two previous sections around the texts of the menu.

Unlike many of the non-Chinese items on the Diamond Grill menu, chop suey retains its place on contemporary Chinese Canadian restaurant menus. The white or western items feel antiquated and anachronistic. We know what Chicken Chop Suey or Sweet and Sour Pork Spare Ribs might be. On the other hand, a Love Me Special fancy sundae or a Manhattan Sandwich feel foreign, as though they belong to another time or space. This stability of the Chineseness of the menus across time stages the disjuncture between the historical shifts in whiteness and that of Chineseness.

The progressivist reading of this disjuncture would be the dominant one of European progress – whiteness changes, advances and develops more rapidly than Chineseness. Extending this reading towards a liberal multiculturalism, you might even say that as whiteness advances and becomes more tolerant, it allows for an increasingly visible Chineseness on the menu. Each menu successively contains more and more Chinese dishes. The New Dayton menu of 1923 offers no Chinese dishes at all. The Diamond Grill menu of 1951 offers eight and contemporary menus such as the Club Café or the Parkview reverse the Diamond Grill's proportions of Chinese food, offering mostly Chinese food and only five or six Western Chinese. How might we think through this increasingly visible and overt Chineseness on the restaurant menus? I want to caution against the temptation to link the increasingly visible Chineseness of the menus with the political liberalization or opening up of Canadian immigration policy. On the surface, this link would seem to make sense. In 1923, Canada passed what became unofficially known as the Exclusion Act, a change to the Chinese Immigration Act which made Chinese immigration into Canada virtually impossible. In 1947, Canada repealed the act, allowing for limited Chinese immigration. In 1988, Canada passed the Multiculturalism Act, an attempt to officially acknowledge cultural difference and pluralism in Canada. Accordingly, it would make sense to think of the increasing Chineseness of the restaurant menus as following the trajectory of these changes to Canadian immigration policy.

However, this reading would presume a linear and causal history of increasing tolerance. This is, of course, the story that Canada tells itself about its own history of racism (the story goes something like this: we were bad before but we are learning, we are becoming more enlightened and more tolerant and we are getting better now). It is a story that follows a liberal notion of progress as well as an easy historicist notion of history's linearity which is deeply problematic in terms of its objectification and dismissal of the past.

Let me propose that the Chineseness of the restaurants is not just outdated, but it is *out of time*. In his discussion of the problem of the writing of minority histories, Dipesh Chakrabarty challenges Fredric Jameson's injunction to "always historicize": "historicizing is not the problematic part of the injunction, the troubling term is 'always.' For the assumption of a continuous, homogeneous, infinitely stretched out time that makes possible the imagination of a 'always' is put to question by subaltern pasts that makes the present, as Derrida says, 'out of joint'" (111). The heterogeneity of the time of the Chinese restaurant menus challenges the continuous empty one of European history. Within the outdatedness of the restaurants, we can read a form of diasporic resistance.

The first lines of the menu read: "Diamond Grill, Nelson's Newest and Most Modern Restaurant." From the perspective of the twenty-first century reader, the Diamond Grill's claim to be modern seems quaint and yet antiquated. And yet, contemporary small town Chinese restaurants are also seen as being quaint and outdated. The Diamond Grill's antiquity relates to the antiquity of contemporary restaurants such as the Club Café in Innisfail or the A & J in Olds (see fig. 6 and fig. 1). They are old, relics. There is a sense that very little has changed. On contemporary menus such has those of the Club or Golden Wheel's, the Chinese food offerings are largely elaborations of the Chinese dishes at the Diamond – different kinds of chop suey, chow mein, egg foo yong and so on.

Compared to the cosmopolitan bustle of twenty-first-century Chinatowns of Vancouver and Toronto, these restaurants seem old-fashioned and out of step with the changing pace of new immigration patterns and new immigrant identities. This quality of being out of step brings up back to Homi Bhabha's theory of the time-lag or belatedness of racialized subjects.[33] It is what Gilroy has marked as the counterculture of modernity and "the living memory of the changing same" (198).[34] From the perspective of history, this belatedness would be what Chakrabarty has called the time knot of subaltern history – that is, the idea of a plurality of times existing together or the disjuncture of the present with itself (109). Whether we read the discordant time of the restaurants as belated or disjunctive, they contain an alternate or different temporality which challenges the desire of late modern capitalist formations to write them out of the present. This is more than just the story of survival. This is about slowing down and occasionally br(e)aking the relentless flow of late modernity's desire to hurry away from that which it has marked as non-modern. "It is the function of the *lag* to slow down the linear, progressive time of modernity to reveal its 'gesture', its *tempi*, 'the pauses and stresses of the whole performance'" (Bhabha 253). The menus assert a slowness in the construction of Chineseness which poses a challenge to the speed of a supposedly new global order that insists on its own newness.

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[33] Although Bhabha's thinking on the concept of the time lag unfolds throughout The Location of Culture, and is perhaps, one of the central, unifying concepts of the book, it is best captured in the closing pages of the conclusion "Fanon, race and the time of modernity" p. 246-56. Bhabha argues that the "progressive myth of modernity… is an attempt… to universalize the spatial fantasy of modern cultural communities as living their history 'contemporaneously', in a 'homogenous empty time' of the People-as-One that finally deprives minorities of those marginal, liminal spaces from which they can intervene in the unifying and totalizing *myths* of national culture"(249). For Bhabha then, the time lag is a space from which to enunciate the disjunctive which, as he argues in "The Postcolonial and Postmodern," is the space of agency: "This emphasis on the disjunctive present of utterance enables the historian to get away from defining subaltern consciousness as binary, as having positive or negative dimensions. It allows the articulation of subaltern agency to emerge as relocation and reinscription. In the seizure of the sign… there is neither dialectical sublation nor the empty signifier: there is a

As I noted earlier in this chapter, by slowness, I do not mean the characterization of time in non-urban space as idyllic and somehow slower than that of the metropolis. In reading small town Chinese restaurant menus, my goal has been to render more specific

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contestation of the given symbols of authority that shifts the terrains of antagonism" (193).

[34] There is substantial overlap between Gilroy's thinking on race and the time of modernity and Bhabha's thinking on the same subject. While they both emphasize the disruptive possibilities of the disjunctive temporality of diasporic time, the difference between their two considerations lies in their conceptions of agency. For Bhabha, the time lag is the space from which agency is articulated. For Gilroy, the disjunctive time of black counterculture is itself constitutive of modernity and black identity. Citing Ralph Ellison on the experience of temporal disjunction, Gilroy notes: "Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around.' A precious sense of black particularity gets constructed from several interlocking themes

Bhabha's incisive observations about diasporic temporality and the idea of the time-lag. Following from Bhabha's analysis, the speed of progress is not necessarily that of the metropolis, but that of modernity (which, when it needs a spatial home, tends to be situated in the metropolis). As Reinhart Koselleck observes, there is an intimate relationship between speed and European modernity. In "Moderntiy and the Planes of Historicity" he argues that in the period from 1500 to 1800 "there occurs a temporalization (*Verzeitlichung*) of history, at the end of which there is the peculiar form of *acceleration* which characterizes modernity" (5 my emphasis). Koselleck recounts Robespierre's famous 1793 speech on the Revolutionary Constitution. Robespierre declared:

"The time has come to call upon each to realize his own destiny. The progress of human Reason has laid the basis for this great Revolution, and the particular duty of hastening it has fallen to you" (cited in Koselleck 7). In contrast to Luther's era where "the compression of time is a visible sign that, according to God's will, the Final Judgement is imminent, that the world is about it end," Koselleck notes that "[f]or Robespierre, the acceleration of time is a task of men leading to an epoch of freedom and happiness, the golden future" (7). Robespierre's inauguration of the individual autonomous agent of history who would "realize his own destiny" heralds an era where rational men should rush headlong into possibilites and promises of a progressive future. To quote a Canadian telecommunications firm, "the future is friendly."[35]

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that culminate in this unexpected time signature. They supply the accents, rests, breaks *and* tones that make black identity possible" (202).

[35] This is an advertising slogan for Telus, a telephone, mobile phone and high-speed internet provider based in Vancouver, British Columbia.

In many ways, recent Chinese diaspora criticism has also embraced a notion of a liberatory modernity, of a friendlier future peopled by modern subjects. In analyses which call for a move beyond a perceived idea of an outdated Chineseness, the desire for a certain freedom from the past is part of a larger goal towards a more agential understanding of the Chinese diaspora subject in North America. In her 1998 article, "Can One Say No to Chineseness?" Ien Ang argues that one of the central problems for Chinese diaspora studies is around that of modernizing Chinese and, at the same time, creating a modernity that is Chinese:

> Central to the intellectual problematic of cultural China is what one sees as the urgent need to reconcile Chineseness and modernity as the twentieth century draws to a close. There are two interrelated sides to this challenge. On the one hand, the question is how to modernize Chineseness itself in a way that will correct and overcome the arguably abject course taken by the existing political regime in China, a course almost universally perceived as wrong… On the other hand, there is also the question of how to sinicize modernity – how, that is, to create a modern world that is truly Chinese and not simply an imitation of the West. (229-30)

Ang's call for modernizing Chineseness belies an investment in an idea of the march of historical progress where Chineseness needs to catch up to European modernity. Similarly, Aihwa Ong's discussion of flexible citizenship also invests in a sense of urgency around the need to separate old and new diaspora subjects. Ong argues for an agential view of modern Chinese transnationalists who "subvert the ethnic absolutism born of nationalism and the processes of cultural othering that have intensified with transnationality" (24). This appeal for a consideration of a new migrant subjectivity divorced from the old one of indentured and migrant labor movements hopes to fend off contemporary racism by arguing against archaic representations of Chineseness that are not representative of contemporary Chinese diasporic populations. Similarly, in her discussion of racist stereotypes and Chineseness in Canada, Maria Ng surveys recent Chinese Canadian literature and suggests that "[i]t would seem then that nothing much has changed in the landscape of Chinese Canadian communities in over 100 years of literary representation, which prompts [her] to ask: are Chinese all over Canada forever chained to laundromats, restaurants, sweatshops, and herbal medicine shops in variations of Chinatowns?" ("Chop Suey" 171). Calling for a movement away from what she understands as derogatory and stereotypical representation of Chinese Canadians, Ng suggests the need for a movement away from representations of Chinese Canadians that are too tied to the past:

> Although they represent a kind of reality of earlier immigrant lives, and although they are experiences that need to be recorded and remembered… a wider and more inclusive representation of Chinese Canadian lives is needed, not only to prevent the continuing impression of a nondifferentiated ethnic group called the Chinese but also to include and empower the lives of recent immigrants who are contributing to the Canada of the twenty-first century. ("Chop Suey" 184)

Ng's call for differentiation between the Chinese immigrant of the past and the new Chinese immigrant of the present assumes an understanding of Chinese immigrant subjectivity as one which has become progressively more sophisticated, more removed from the degrading positions to which earlier immigrants were relegated. In the "immigrants who are contributing to the Canada of the twenty-first century," there is a suggestion that the immigrants who contributed to the Canada of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are outdated and no longer representative of the contemporary Chinese Canadian subject.[36] And yet, this desire to make the past past suggests that the history of Chinese immigration in Canda has followed a trajectory of increasing cosmopolitanism.

This desire to make the past past risks relegating what might be considered old diaspora subjectivities to the dustbin of Chinese diaspora history rather than thinking through the ways in which these identities not only haunt modern diaspora subjectivity but are constitutive of it. Recognizing the constitutive role of the past, Chakrabarty suggests that "difference is always the name of a relationship, for it separates just as much as it connects… one could argue that alongside the present or the modern the medieval must linger as well, if only as that which exists as the limit or the border to the practices that define the modern" (110). In differentiating the new diaspora from the old, the history of coolie labor migration lingers on the border of the cosmopolitan transnationalist entrepreneur. In her consideration of diaspora culture, Spivak warns against too easy distinctions between the old diasporas and the new. She asks, "What were the old diasporas, before the world was thoroughly consolidated as transnational? They were the results of religious oppression and war, of slavery and indenturing, trade and conquest… [A]re the new diasporas quite new? Every rupture is also a repetition" (245, 248). Similarly, Vijay Mishra proposes the idea of a "diasporic imaginary" as a way of thinking about the way in which old and new diasporas work together in the construction of diasporic subjectivity. He also warns of too easy a celebration of transnationality and deterritorialization. Cautioning against reading diasporas as "*the* ideal social condition," Mishra suggests that essentialist narratives of homeland and exile will continue to haunt them so long as the specter of racist culture persists (426). Mishra's identification of the perseverance of racist culture is important for thinking about why attempts by new diaspora subjects, savvy and educated flexible citizens, cannot break through in a cultural space that will continue to question their right to full citizenship in the first place.

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[36] In "Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and the Construction of Selfhood," Keya Ganguly traces a similar trajectory in the experience of middle class Indian men emigrating to the United States where "the representation of identity involves a complex distancing from the past. The attempt to consolidate respectability in the bourgeois, diasporic context requires constructing the past as the undesirable other. However, the devaluation of the past indicates and itself produces the present, hybrid identity of immigrant men" (38). Much of this essay reappears as the third chapter of States of Exception, "Personal Memory and the Contradictions of Selfhood." As the difference in the title suggests, Ganguly's latter version of the essay highlights the ways in which this desire to keep the past separate from the present is more about the contradictions of this hybrid state than the construction of selfhood.

I do not want to glorify the old-fashioned or the outdated. Nor do I want to assert the Chinese cook or restaurateur as the ideal Chinese diasporic subject. However, I am doubtful of claims to the new, to something which too easily divorces itself from an ugly past of state-sanctioned labor exploitation and legalized racism. In her discussion of the problem of developing a materialist feminist historiography, Rosemary Hennessy argues that newness can function as a particular kind of conservatism:

> The conservative face of the new appears in its function as a mechanism whereby oppositional modes of thinking are sutured into the prevailing regimes of truth in order to maintain a symbolic order. The discourse of the new can serve to anchor

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> emergent modes of thinking in traditional categories that help support rather than disrupt the prevailing social order… In its conservative manifestation, the appeal to new-ness serves as the guarantor of repetition, an articulating instrument whereby the *preconstructed* categories that comprise the symbolic infrastructure of the social imaginary are sustained through moments of historical crisis by their dissimulation in the guise of the new. (103-104)

As Hennessy observes, the desire for newness can sometimes conceal a certain conservatism. Declarations of the agential exemplarity of the new diaspora risk re-entrenching the conventions of the old. In the anachronism invested in small town Chinese restaurants, there is a sense that they are not only not representative of contemporary Chinese Canadian subjectivities, but also that they are moving towards extinction. Part of this is tied to a pervasive narrative of increasing urbanization. In this narrative, we will all eventually live in major cities, our food will come from mega-agricultural operations, and the small town will eventually die. I find this narrative suspicious. The air of inevitability has the imprint of one of European modernity's favorite narratives – progress, the march of time towards some sort of developmental utopia, one where, in this case, we will all be transnational cosmopolitans identifying more with our mega-cities than our national boundaries. The declaration of newness carries in it the desire for a divorce from what has been declared uncomfortably old and old-fashioned. Chinese Canadian restaurants are old. But they are not extinct. Chinese immigrants still work as cooks. Even though the Chineseness of Chinese Canadian restaurants doesn't seem to fit with the new image of savvy and educated Chinese immigrants, I want to hang on to the politics of their unsuitability. Rather than jettisoning their Chineseness as unrepresentative, I have tried to think through the way in which their lack of fit with what might be called new Chinese diaspora subjectivity reveals the repetition in the rupture of new diaspora subjectivity. It is not that Chineseness should be stable or that it is doomed to a cycle of being tied to coolie labor trajectories, but that the restaurants suggest an alternate and simultaneous temporality which is out of step, which challenges the European narrative of linear progress.

In the assertion of a new Chinese diaspora, we risk not hearing the resistance of the old and instead re-articulating the racist history that confined it. The answer is not, of course, to cling to the past. But perhaps we might be able to read through texts such as the menu the way in which the past inhabits the present. As Chakrabarty suggests, "because we already have experience of that which makes the present noncontemporaneous with itself that we can actually historicize. Thus what allows historians to historicize the medieval or the ancient is the very fact that these worlds are never completely lost. We inhabit their fragments even when we classify ourselves as modern and secular" (112). In reading against the grain of a history that wants to progress into a future of increasing liberalized tolerance with racism as an unfortunate specter of its past, I am not suggesting that we cling stubbornly to the racism of the past. Instead, I am hoping to make way for a reading of resistance which recognizes the kinds of strategies and negotiations that might be at work in negotiating the racism of the everyday.

The menus retain the traces of the culture of the counter where the long shiny plastic expanse separating the server from the served is not always a singular line. Counters can circle back on themselves, but to move in between them you still have to feel for the modern in the anachronomisms of the present. In a prose poem commemorating the two connected horseshoe-shaped counters at the Diamond Grill, Fred Wah writes:

> These two counters have been designed for maximum use of a small space and are laid out to perform one continuous unit running past the soda fountain and up to the till. The only door in this Arborite feedlot is really a gate between the first counter seat and the glass display case of the till and can only be opened by those of us who know how to operate its very modern latch, hidden so you have to finger it from the bottom. This café is the newest and most modern establishment in Nelson (before the new Greyhound depot) and, of all its doors, I enjoy this gate with the secret latch, this early instance of the power that comes from camouflage and secrecy. (33-34)

In the culture of the counter, the line separating the server and the served maintains the appearance of shiny Arborite solidity. But there is a secret latch, a modern latch, where you feel your way through the underside of the plasticity of rumour and memory to pass. This secret passageway is partly about the way in which the culture of the counter turns the sadnesses of servitude into a counterculture of agential self-positioning. It is also about the countercultural habit of pushing the smugness of the present up against itself. Wah's insistence on the modernity of the latch against the outmoded materiality of Arborite suggests that inhabitating the precariousness of migrancy depends on an understanding of what it means to live in the present while still feeling, sometimes blindly, for the past.

In the epigraph to this chapter, Kundera suggests that there is a direct relationship between speed and forgetting, between bodies moving, hurtling through time, and the pasts which they wish to sever away. What Kundera does not say is that we sometimes move quickly away from memories which cause us pain. This is a rational move. I recognize that it is not only the desires of middle-class ascendancy which might cause us to want to keep the past in the past, to be swept up in the giddy momentum of a triumphancy where we have, through the sacrifices of sweat and blood, achieved the small signs of gaining a toehold in a ruthless world of socialized racism – a house in a good neighbourhood, children with university degrees, a front lawn which does not have to do double duty as an extra vegetable patch. It is very tempting to fight to "arrive" and then to turn and say, *I am not one of them. Don't confuse me with them.* These are not easy pasts. But declaring them to be in the past, rather than recognizing that the "new" Chinese immigrant is just as likely to be a dishwasher at a Chinese restaurant or a garment worker as she is to be a member of the transnational elite, works precisely within a racist regime where the linear march of time and progress wants to situate the dispossessed simply as an unfortunate feature of the non-modern. The precariousness of migrancy means that the ugly head of racism will always threaten to emerge. The words "go home" will continue to resonate. It is because of this that the we need to find a way to move in slowness and embrace the constant intrusion of the past in the present. The secret bond between slowness and memory lies in finding a way to make peace with pasts that harbor pain and humiliation.

In considering the Chinese Canadian restaurant menu across space and time, I have been arguing for a way of reading the menu as a text which bears witness to the agency of Chinese Canadian diaspora subjects in their scripting of "Canadian" for Canadians and their production of a Chineseness. These representations challenge the notion of authentic Chinese at the same time that they serve up a comforting and fixed Chineseness. They also challenge the progressive and linear time of European history. In understanding them as out of time, they stage the constructedness of Euro-Canadian time. Against the speed of an insistently globalized world order that denies the constitutive role of the past, the diasporic agency of slowness emerges in the time of the menu.

Chapter Three

Disappearing Chinese Cafe: White Nostalgia and the Public Sphere

"Nothing lasts for long," sings Joni Mitchell in "Chinese Café/Unchained Melody." Rather than nothing, the song itself suggests that there are some very specific things which do not last for long. This chapter is an exploration of white nostalgia and the desire to commemorate the Chinese restaurant while simultaneously marking its disappearance. Like the prairie grain elevator, the Chinese restaurant has been re-cast as an icon of a purer, more innocent past. Unlike the wooden grain elevator, however, the restaurants continue to exist in most small towns. They have not disappeared and yet there is a curious acceptance of the forecast of their disappearance. The attempt to situate the Chinese restaurant as a location of a hermetic past is not unique to triumphalist narratives of Chinese immigrant ascendancy. This desire to keep the past in the past also plays a role in the consolidation of dominant white subjectivity. While the previous chapter proposes an understanding of diasporic temporality which frustrates the demands of historicism, I do not want to suggest an arbitrary separation between the axes of space and time. The next two chapters take up an exploration of diasporic spatiality that is enmeshed with a diasporic temporality. I begin with a consideration of the Chinese restaurant as a diasporic space which refuses to stay in the background, to be the supportive space of otherness for the drama of the consolidation of dominant subjectivity.

This chapter turns to the music of Joni Mitchell and Sylvia Tyson and explores the representation of the Chinese restaurant in two songs which share a remarkably similar narrative. I take up Mitchell's "Chinese Café/Unchained Melody" and Tyson's "The Night the Chinese Restaurant Burned Down" not only because of their narrative overlaps, but also because the representations of the Chinese restaurant in these two songs illuminate the peculiar role of the Chinese restaurant in the consolidation of a white subjectivity. The first part of this chapter examines the narratives of loss and nostalgia which pervade the songs and reads these narratives within the context of the classic *Bildungsroman*. In the second part of the chapter, I suggest that there is a connection through the notion of loss between the *Bildung* narrative and Jurgen Habermas' concept of the public sphere. I then take up a critical exploration of the public sphere in terms of its contradictions and colonialist predications. In the final part of the chapter, I return to the question which launched this chapter, why the Chinese restaurant in particular? Why do both songs specifically identify the Chinese restaurant, rather than any other space of small town life, as the location of these narratives? Bringing together the discussion in the preceding parts of the chapter, I argue that the Chinese restaurant in these songs functions as a screen in both senses – it screens out and suppresses the predications of white subjectivity at the same time that it serves as a space of projection for that subjectivity. While this chapter focuses on the narratives of these two songs, the use of the Chinese restaurant and the suppressed circulation of Chineseness in these narratives intimate something larger about the function of otherness within forms of white nostalgia that is not specific to the Mitchell and Tyson songs. Beneath the general longing for spaces of commonality such as public spheres where debate and rational discourse can influence the governance of civil societies, the ideals of our post-Enlightenment legacies, lies a diasporic spatiality which throws into relief the attempts to relegate otherness into the background.

Portraits of Development: the Artist as a Young Woman

In 1982, Joni Mitchell released "Chinese Café/Unchained Melody" on the Wild Things Run Fast album. This song also became a standard and was re-released on Mitchell's collection, Hits, in 1996. Similarly, Sylvia Tyson's "The Night the Chinese Restaurant Burned Down" which was released on compact disc in 1989, emerged in the aftermath of the height of 1960s folk music.[1] Both songs have become standards in Mitchell's and Tyson's respective music repertoires. Coming almost two decades after the height of the folk music's dominance of North American popular music, it's not surprising that both songs are retrospectives written from the perspective of a middle aged woman who looks back onto a time before fame, when the singers were small town Canadian girls dreaming about adulthood in the local café, the Chinese restaurant. I want to read these two songs together because they share a strikingly similar narrative sung in a similar musical genre: both songs look back on being in the café with a girlfriend ("Carol" in the Mitchell song and "Maggie" in the Tyson song); use sentimental love songs of the 1950s ("Unchained Melody" and "Canadian Sunset") as musical intertexts; use the Chinese restaurant as a location of the past; carry autobiographical resonances; and focus the dreams of girlhood and the results of adulthood. Tyson's song opens with the scene of two girls who were on the verge of breaking away from their small town lives:

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[1] In this chapter, I will refer to the music of Joni Mitchell and Sylvia Tyson under the generalized category of "folk" and "folk music." I understand that Tyson's later music can be considered to be more closely associated with the category of "country music" rather than "folk." I also appreciate that there are significant differences between the music of Mitchell and Tyson and what might be considered "authentic" folk music, and that Mitchell and Tyson might more accurately fall under the headings of "folk revivalist" or "folk-rock." However, I use the term "folk" and "folk music" in deference to Robert Cantwell whose history of the music of the 1960s has influenced much of the work in music history, criticism and ethnomusicology which followed. Although the subtitle of Cantwell's book, When We Were Good, is "The Folk Revival," Cantwell generally refers to the music of the 1960s as "folk music" throughout the book and argues for an understanding of this music as connected to what might be considered the more authentic folk music tradition. While there are parts of Cantwell's analysis, particularly in terms of the universality of 1960s folk music, with which I do not entirely concur, I find his handling of this issue of definitions to be very useful.

> Maggie and me were finished with school that summer
> Holding down part-time jobs at the five and dime
> Singing with a band at the Legion Hall on weekends
> Doing those standards about the big-time

Unlike the "girls coming home from the canning factory/ Laughing and talking about their wedding gowns," Maggie and Sylvia do not plan on staying in the town. The bridge of Tyson's song sets up the burning down of the Chinese restaurant as the catalyst for their departure:

> And Maggie and me we were sitting on the steps
> Of the Cenotaph together
> We looked at each other as if we'd been given a sign
>
> Oh the crowd was breaking up as the steam was rising
> From the dying embers in the heart of a dying town
> And Maggie and me caught the last Greyhound at midnight

The night the Chinese restaurant burned down

The end of the Chinese restaurant signals the end of their girlhood, the end of their time in "a dying town."

Similarly, Mitchell's song opens with looking back on the scene of two girls dreaming of bigger things and whiling away the time in the local Chinese restaurant:

Caught in the middle
Carol, we're middle class
We're middle aged
We were wild in the old days
Birth of rock 'n' roll days
Now your kids are coming up straight
And my child's a stranger
I bore her
But I could not raise her
Nothing lasts for long
Nothing lasts for long
Nothing lasts for long
Down at the Chinese Café
We'd be dreaming on our dimes
We'd be playing –
"Oh my love, my darling"
One more time

Mitchell's song spans the years of her adulthood, the giving up of her daughter for adoption and the movement from the wildness of "the old days" to the maturing of their children and the looking back to a time when she and Carol dreamt on dimes, playing "Unchained Melody" on the jukebox one more time.

On the surface, both songs are about the loss of girlhood, the passing of youth. The first part of the refrain in Mitchell's song, "Nothing lasts for long," emphasizes the preoccupations with middle age and the passage of time in the final verse of the song:

> Out on Carol's lawn
> This girl of my childhood games
> Has kids nearly grown and gone
> Grown so fast
> Like the turn of a page
> We look like our mothers did now
> When we were those kids' age

Similarly, Tyson's song closes with a verse on the passage of time:

> It was so long ago, so far away
> Though it seems like yesterday
> Like any other summer night in any other little town
> And the radio was playing Canadian Sunset
> The night the Chinese restaurant burned down.

The familiar lamenting of the trick of time, the way something that has happened so long ago can still seem as though it was only yesterday, opens up the appeal of the song to a sense of its universality in the third line, "Like any other summer night in any other little town."

However, the generalizing themes of the songs lies not only in their appeal to the arrival of middle age reflectiveness, but also in their adherence to a classic *Bildungsroman* narrative structure. The object of loss in these two songs is not so much youth or girlhood, but the *possibilities* of youth and girlhood, what Franco Moretti has identified as the "subjective possibility" of the *Bildungsroman*: "Unlike what occurs in the short story or in tragedy, the novelistic episode does not refer back to an objective necessity, but to a subjective possibility. It is that event which *could also not have taken place*" (45). While there are clearly important formal differences between folk songs and the typical "novel of education" or "novel of development," as the *Bildungsroman* has been loosely defined in English literature, the narrative trajectory of the Mitchell and Tyson songs shares many of the defining characteristics of the classic *Bildungsroman.*[2] These songs are portraits of the artist/songstress as a young woman. They record the movement from youthful innocence to knowing maturity.

Returning then to the subjective possibility of the "Chinese Café" and "The Night the Chinese Restaurant Burned Down" as *Bildung* narratives, the foundational loss that both songs lament is a sense of potentiality which enables the narrative to go forward. At the heart of the *Bildung* narrative is the narrative of loss which enables the consolidation of the liberal subject. Following Moretti, I suggest that this lost potentiality is rooted in a liberal notion of freedom and that the *Bildung* narrative is that of the renunciation of freedom for what Georg Lukács termed the "immanence of meaning" (Moretti 71). In exchange for pure freedom, what might result in anarchy, the liberal subject gains a sense of the meaning of the everyday events which make up a life – sitting in a café and listening to sentimental love songs, Christmas morning at middle age on a girlfriend's lawn. As Moretti perceptively notes, the classical *Bildungsroman* promotes the *opposite* of the promises of the French Revolution:

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[2] I acknowledge Marc Redfield's point regarding the curiously phantom-like quality of the *Bildungsroman* genre, that it is at once terribly general and so specific as to have no exemplar: "On the one hand it is certainly true that under the lens of scholarship the genre rapidly shrinks until, like a figure in Wonderland, it threatens to disappear altogether. Even Wilhelm Meister has proved resistant to being subsumed under the definition it supposedly inspired… But on the other hand, Germanists seem all the more ideologically committed to the truth of this 'critical fiction' for having examined it and found it ontologically wanting" (Redfield 41). However, Redfield himself concedes, one of the

> [I]t indicates a way – the only way, in the world of the novel – to restore harmony to the ruling class: In short: the classical *Bildungsroman* narrates "how the French Revolution could have been avoided." Not by chance is it a genre that developed in Germany – where the revolution never had a chance – and in England – where, concluded over a century earlier, it had opened the way to a social symbiosis that renewed itself with particular effectiveness at the turn of the eighteenth century. (64)

The *Bildung* narrative orchestrates the mediation between the desire for individual autonomy and the necessity of socialization in order to consolidate a rational liberal subject.

One of the great difficulties of the liberal project lies in the contradictions of what it means to be free. As Thomas Holt's study of emancipation in Jamaica reveals, there are only certain kinds of freedom which are permissible under liberal governance. Noting

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reasons why the *Bildungsroman* has persisted lies precisely in this peculiar and that the elite never trusted the working classes, much less emancipated slaves, to "work three days if two days' pay would keep them a week,"[3] Holt suggests that "seventeenth-century political economists never fully accepted the liberal premises, because they were unable to resolve the seemingly inherent contradiction between the ethic of liberalism and the labour needs of a capitalist economy, between individual freedom and social order and utility" (Problem 35). The practical application of liberal ethics meant that free subjects "would be free to bargain in the marketplace but not free to ignore the market… free to pursue their own self-interest but not to reject the cultural conditioning that defined what that self-interest should be" (Holt Problem 53). One is never simply a free subject; one must learn to want to be free in the right way. Harmony can be restored only when the bourgeois reader/listener accepts that the potentiality of absolute freedom must be given up for what Moretti terms "the comfort of civilization" (16).

The opening lines of Mitchell's song perfectly encapsulate the function of the *Bildung* narrative as a mediating structure of bourgeois interests: "Caught in the middle/ Carol, we're middle class/ We're middle aged." From the start, the song centers on coming to terms with being in the middle, of negotiating the disappointments of middle age and the demands of middle class desire. What is gained, the stability of looking "like our mothers did now/ When we were those kids' age" can come only at the expense of the wildness of "rock 'n' roll days." Similarly for Tyson, the distance from the "the girls coming home from the canning factory/ Laughing and talking about their wedding

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contradictory generality and particularity.

[3] When it came time to consider emancipation in Jamaica, the British discovered that the slaves already earned enough to live on doing one day's worth of free labour. "The key question, therefore, was 'What, except compulsion, shall make them work for six?'" (Holt, Problem 43). This is the problem of freedom.

gowns" articulates the sacrifice of girlhood dreams for the pursuit of the self-realization of the young woman artist. Mitchell's and Tyson's emphasis on their middleness situates their songs within the tradition of an Enlightenment valorization of the average. Writing of Walter Scott's penchant for "constructing his [historical] novels around an 'average,' merely worthy and never heroic, 'hero,'" Lukács notes that "[w]e find here a renunciation of romanticism and a further development of the realist traditions of the epoch of Enlightenment" (151). These stories of the development of the woman artist emphasize a connection to the folk. This is the ideological work of an enlightened narrative which coerces through its folksy inclusiveness. The *Bildung* narrative of the emergence of "Joni Mitchell" and "Sylvia Tyson" as folk music icons works overtime to underscore their middling ordinariness.

Reading these songs within the tradition of the women's *Bildungsroman* in particular, it is specifically a notion of female subjectivity which Mitchell and Tyson consolidate in their songs. What the songs mediate is not only the problem of being middle class and middle aged, but also that of being a middle class and middle aged woman. For Moretti, the bourgeois dilemma is between individual autonomy and socialization. That has not gone away. But these songs suggest that this dilemma is inflected by gender for middle class, middle aged, white women. These songs are about the woman who got away from the canning factory, the woman whose kids didn't grow up straight, who didn't end up with the manicured lawn of middle class home. Mitchell and Tyson narrate a gendered version of Moretti's description of the bourgeois liberal dilemma, that of feminist autonomy set against the socialization of womanhood, of the wildness of rock and roll days against taking on the appearances of their mothers. As

Moretti bluntly puts it, "You would like such and such values to be realized? – fine, but then you must also accept these others, for without them the former cannot exist" (17). The women in Mitchell and Tyson's songs take the particularity of individual freedom over that of a collective social one. This choice "is the *raison d'être* of the classical *Bildungsroman*: if the hero[ine] wishes to enjoy absolute freedom in a specific domain of [her] existence, in other sectors of social activity there must prevail instead complete *conformity*. Every day life, we have seen, demands the *stability* of social relationships" (Moretti 55). A necessary exchange girds the promise of freedom. In the economy of liberal subjectivity, nothing is free, not even the pursuit of freedom. And particularly not the pursuit of freedom from small town marriage, a life at the canning factory or the five and dime, and the singing standards at the Legion Hall on weekends.

Both songs occlude this necessary exchange through the narrative of loss. In this occlusion, it is not that the women in the songs give up social freedom in exchange for individual freedom, but that the chance for social freedom is lost with the passing of the restaurant. "Nothing lasts for long," Mitchell laments repeatedly in "Chinese Café." Both songs associate the passing of the Chinese restaurant with the passing of this potentiality. In Tyson's song, this potentiality is burned away, incinerated. Mitchell is at once less graphic and more precise in the *Bildung* model where "*non*capitalist work" is crucial to the development of the "specific individual, and to the end of emphasizing [her] peculiarities" (Moretti 29). In Mitchell's song, the potentiality is lost to the incursions of capitalist greed. The second verse of "Chinese Café" begins:

Uranium money

Is booming in the old home town now

Putting up sleek concrete

Tearing the old landmarks down

Paving over brave little parks

Ripping off Indian land again

How long – how long

Short-sighted businessmen

Ah, nothing lasts for long

Mitchell blames the short-sightedness of capitalist accumulation for the passing of the opportunity, for the loss of potentiality. Noting that Lukács and Georg Simmel agree particularly on the inability of the "modern 'personality' – what [he] think[s] of as the 'snowflake hypothesis,' the idea that we were all as individual as a snowflake, that was the mantra of my first grade teacher – to reach its goal in professional occupation alone, that is to say, in work," Moretti notes that "[t]hose who devote themselves to a modern profession must give up their own personality" (41). In the classic *Bildung* narrative, work is too impersonal and objective as a means of allowing for the expression of the individuality and particularity of the artist.

In this second verse of "Chinese Café," Mitchell's assertion of artistic individuality comes at the expense of the de-humanization of business. It is uranium money that puts up sleek concrete and tears the old landmarks down. Mitchell's juxtaposition of her individual artistic development against that of the impersonality of the machinery of capitalism echoes John Stuart Mill's defense of individuality. In On Liberty Mill writes:

> Supposing it were possible to to get houses built, corn grown, battles fought, causes tried, and even churches erected and prayers said by machinery – by automatons in human form – it would be a considerable loss to exchange for these automatons even the men and women who at present inhabit the more civilized parts of the world, and who assuredly are but starved specimens of what nature can and will produce. Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing. (123)

Mill's deployment of the metaphor of the machine set against that of the tree puts into play a now familiar trope of the need to defend the freedom of the natural against the constraints of conformity. For Mill, the very definition of liberty and progress lies in the full expression of individuality.

Mitchell's situating of her own development outside the realm of soul-less machinery of "short-sighted businessmen" allows for an assertion of her individuality through the "noncapitalist" work of being an artist. In "Come in from the Cold," a song released in 1991, Mitchell disconnects her work as an artist from that of capitalist work and simultaneously emphasizes the potentiality of her development as an artist:

> We really thought we had a purpose
> We were so anxious to achieve
> We had hope
> The world held promise
> For a slave

To liberty
Freely I slaved away for
something better
And I was bought and sold

In the context of the *Bildung* narrative, Mitchell's references to slavery points to the contradictions of freedom for the liberal subject. Rather than needing an "escape from freedom" (Moretti 64), Mitchell is a slave to liberty who slaves freely "for/ something better." And despite, or perhaps because of, the freeness of her labour, she is nonetheless "bought and sold." Of course, it is her music that is the object of exchange. These lyrics both disconnect her from the impersonality of capitalist work at the same time that it valorizes the individuality of her artistic work. In "Chinese Café," uranium money not only lacks personality, it also generates a paving over of the particular – sleek concrete replaces old landmarks, parking lots erase little parks, and all of this is accomplished by robbing First Nations peoples again. Mitchell's emphasis on place in this list of things lost to capitalist greed emphasizes a belief in the possibilities of local places, the potentiality of the public space. "Chinese Café" and "The Night the Chinese Restaurant Burned Down" mourn the loss of this common public space.

Structuring Nostalgia: Mourning the Public Sphere

I have shown that the Mitchell and Tyson songs revolve around the loss of a potentiality rather than the ostensible object of youth or girlhood. Let me turn now to explore what that potentiality constitutes. Although the narrative circulates around a singular subject, it would be a mistake to see the lament as an individualized one. What is lost is not the potentiality, the subjective possibility, of an individual subject, but something larger, a collective possibility. While the *Bildungsroman* narrates how the French Revolution could have been avoided, the loss which consolidates the individual subject is one that must be read within the larger collective horizon of possibility. In the general case of the *Bildung* narrative, we avoid the French Revolution through the narrative which asks us to give up the promise of the French Revolution. In the specific case of these songs, Mitchell and Tyson avert the promises of 1960s idealism through a narrative which mourns the loss of that idealism rather than celebrates its achievements, however they may be defined.

What is mourned in both songs is the thwarting of what comes after the women take the last Greyhound out of a dying town, the birth of rock 'n' roll days. Both songs end at the beginning of their departures from their girlhood lives, at the beginning of their careers. Poised at an end and a beginning, the songs narrate the departures from the small towns, from fifties orchestral music, but what is lost is not these things themselves but the innocence and idealism of what they left the small towns and fifties orchestral music *for*. That is, what is lost is not what came before or what came after the launching of their careers into stardom, but the possibilities of what came after before it could happen, the moment of potentiality mislaid. And it is not individual freedom which has been sacrificed, but the promise of the 1960s as a musical departure from the tightly orchestrated sentimentality of songs such as "Canadian Sunset" and "Unchained Melody" – a musical departure which gestures toward the promise of a political departure from the tightly orchestrated sentimentality of the 1950s post-World War Two world of weekends at the Legion Hall and marriage as the only escape from the canning factory and part-time jobs at the five and dime. The promises of 1960s North American counterculture are not explicitly raised in the Mitchell and Tyson songs, but they appear in the repudiation of the world the songs depict.

The world of both songs is infused by a musical genre which precedes the 1960s revolution in folk music in which both Mitchell and Tyson would be key players. Both songs make specific references to 1950s orchestral love songs, songs that were sung by male crooners backed by full orchestras. Mitchell refers directly to the intertext in the title of her song, "Chinese Café/Unchained Melody" and Tyson specifically links the Chinese restaurant with "Canadian Sunset" in the couplet that closes both the first and the final verse of the song: "And the radio was playing Canadian Sunset/The night the Chinese restaurant burned down." The versions of "Unchained Melody"[4] and "Canadian Sunset"[5] which were most likely floating in the air in the 1950s would have been the orchestral versions. Although the Righteous Brothers' version of "Unchained Melody" has become more prominent in the recent years, particularly in the wake of its re-recording as part of the soundtrack for the 1990 Hollywood blockbuster movie Ghost, the version that would have been on the radio and in the jukeboxes in the fifties would most likely have been the orchestral version recorded by Les Baxter. Similarly, Andy

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[4] "Unchained Melody" was originally written by Hy Zaret (words) and Alex North (music) for a 1955 prison-farm film, Unchained, starring Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch. It reached the number one spot on the Billboard charts with a version by Les Baxter. Versions by Al Hibbler, Roy Hamilton and June Valli kept the song on the charts throughout the rest of the 1950s. In 1965 (a year that has now become significant in folk revivalism's history because of the events at the Newport Folk Festival) the song was a number four hit for the Righteous Brothers.

[5] "Canadian Sunset" peaked on the Billboard charts at number seven with a version by Andy Williams. It was written by Norman Gimbel and Eddie Heywood.

Williams' "Canadian Sunset" was recorded with a full orchestra and was one of the biggest hits of his career. Its lyrics are analogous to those of "Unchained Melody." Like "Unchained Melody," the song opens with a statement of loneliness and longing and revolves around what we might now think of as the FM radio penchant for songs about everlasting love (although, admittedly, not many contemporary Billboard songs evoke Canadian ski trails so romantically):

> Once I was alone
> So lonely and then
> You came, out of nowhere
> Like the sun up from the hills
> Cold, cold was the wind
> Warm, warm were your lips
> Out there, on that ski trail
> Where your kiss filled me with thrills
> A weekend in Canada, a change of scene was the most I bargained for
> And then I discovered you and in your eyes
> I found the love that I couldn't ignore
> Down, down came the sun
> Fast, fast, fast, beat my heart
> I knew when the sun set
> From that day, we'd never ever part. (Gimbel and Heywood)

I am pausing on these two "background" songs not only because they form another point of correspondence between the Mitchell and Tyson songs, but because they signal something larger about the relationship of the Chinese restaurant, liberal subjectivity and the *Bildung* narrative.

The citation of 1950s love songs not only infuses the world of girlish dreaming that both songs describe; it also collapses the space of the Chinese restaurant with that of the music that Mitchell and Tyson associate with it. Mitchell's evocation of "Unchained Melody" suggests that there is an intimate relationship between the Chinese restaurant and the music which floats through the air in the jukeboxes and on the radios of the restaurant. The semantics of the slash at work in the title of the song, "Chinese Café/ Unchained Melody," discloses the metonymic relationship between the music on the jukebox and the space of the restaurant itself. The slash suggests a kind of interchangeability, an easy transition between one term and another. Balanced on either side of the punctuation mark are two terms, markers, signifiers. The relationship Mitchell and Tyson establish between the Chinese restaurant and the musical intertexts of their songs relegates the Chinese restaurant to a kind of pastness.

The Mitchell and Tyson songs are a lament for a space of commonality, both that of female companionship in the Chinese restaurant itself, and then the 1960s folk scene which comes after. The drama of the loss of the space of the Chinese restaurant (either through the finality of a fire or through the irreversible flow of time) unfolds and gestures towards the drama of the loss of the public sphere of the sixties folk music revival.[6] From the perspective of the Mitchell and Tyson songs, the public sphere of the 1960s are goals rather than realized spaces of public discourse. The songs are representations of a possible future. The subject of loss in both of these songs is not just youth, not just the restaurant and not just girlhood, but also the loss of a the possibility of an ideal space of commonality.

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[6] The songs speak also to the loss of a particular understanding of a historical moment in North America when folk festivals, coffeehouses, and tiny, smoke-filled living rooms in the East Village constituted a bourgeois public sphere in precisely the sense of the Habermasian ideal. While this is not the purpose of my chapter, let me briefly point out that both the space of the Chinese restaurant and the sixties folk music revival can be understood as public spheres. In the case of the former, as historians of Canadian small towns have noted, Chinese restaurants were often the only communal gathering place for

I want to read this lost space of commonality within the context of Jurgen Habermas' public sphere. Extending Moretti's reading of the subjective possibility of the *Bildungsroman*, I suggest that this potentiality takes shape in the concept of the Habermasian public sphere. The relationship between the *Bildung* narrative and the Habermasian public sphere is one that Habermas himself alludes to in The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. Early in the argument, Habermas takes up Goethe's Wilhelm Meister as an excursive example of the demise of the representative publicness which he associates with the absolutist state. As Marc Redfield suggests, Wilhelm Meister is perhaps *the* exemplary text of the *Bildungsroman* genre. Goethe's novel is Redfield's test case for arguing that the *Bildungsroman* genre, under scrutiny, "threatens

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small towns in Canada. Similarly, there are many affinities between the production and circulation of folk music in the sixties and the structure of the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere. Not only did much of the music emerge out of New York coffeehouses, not only did the musical discourse permeating these coffeehouses also disseminate through print media dedicated to this coffeehouse discourse (Broadside and Sing Out!), but the music was also understood as a discursive institution which was outside of the state and yet was deeply engaged in the project political commentary. In his history of sixties folk music and culture, David Pichaske suggests the way in which folk music of the 1960s could be seen as a sphere of its own: "And the songs were printed in Broadside and Sing Out! and they were sung in the streets and coffeehouses of New York and Boston and Philadelphia and across the South and finally on records and on FM stations, and they have thus found their way into American consciousness, a permanent record of early sixties protest" (58). For more detailed histories of this music and its political implications, please see also Robert Cantwell's When We Were Good and Richie Unterberger's Turn!Turn!Turn!

to disappear altogether. *Even* Wilhelm Meister," Redfield argues, "has proved resistant to being subsumed under the definition it supposedly inspired" (41 my emphasis). Whether Goethe's novel inspired the genre or is exemplary of it matters less in my discussion than the concurrent use of the novel in Habermas' defining of the bourgeois public sphere. For Habermas, the failure of Wilhelm's attempt at representative publicness, at being Hamlet, illuminates the necessary downfall of representative publicness and, if I can be excused the pun, sets the stage for the ascendance of the bourgeois public sphere: "Wilhelm Meister's theatrical mission had to fail. It was out of step, as it were, with the bourgeois public sphere whose platform the theatre had meanwhile become" (Habermas 14). In other words, Habermas locates within Wilhelm Meister the expression of a proto-public sphere, the public space which not only exemplifies the characteristics of anachronistic representative publicness, but also ushers in the new form of publicity which would constitute the basis of the Habermasian ideal. This use of a classic *Bildungsroman* text to demarcate the end of one kind of publicity and the beginning of another suggests, conversely, that the public sphere as an ideal space of rational commonality also plays a role in the *Bildung* narrative. The public sphere is that which is lost, the potentiality of the liberal subject thwarted and so mourned.

The temporal structure of the Mitchell and Tyson songs, the way in which they end poised at a beginning and begin by looking back from an endpoint, suggests that they mourn the loss of something which temporally straddles both the end of their girlhood lives and the beginning of their careers as stars of 1960s folk music culture. They mourn the loss of a common space of public discourse which focuses on both the Chinese

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restaurant as a space of the potentiality of youth, and that which comes after, the 1960s in this case, as an extenuation of that space of potentiality. That is, the Chinese restaurant in these songs sets the stage for the events of the 1960s which lie beneath the surface of the music. Functioning as a proto-public sphere, the Chinese restaurant in these songs demarcates the end of one kind of public space and the emergence of another. Poised at the end of an era of orchestrated sentimentality and ushering the beginning of another marked by the liberatory ideals of free love and free speech, what has been seen as a sexual and civil revolution,[7] the Chinese restaurant prefigures the public sphere of 1960s folk culture.

I have been reading Habermas in a mistaken sense. But I do so in good company. In evoking Habermas' public sphere, I am evoking the contagious idealism of a public space of "rational-critical debate" (Habermas 58) which could permeate the governance of a society. In 1961, Jurgen Habermas published The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. The book was translated and published in English in 1989. Exploring seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English coffeehouses, French salons and German "learned *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies), the old *Sprachgesellschaften* (literary societies)," Habermas identifies a coherent sphere of public discussion amongst the bourgeoisie which began with literary criticism and then moved into the realm of politics (Habermas 34). This bourgeois public sphere opposed the rule of the absolutist state through the use of rational discourse.

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[7] Making the link between the culture of the 1960s folk music scene and the civil rights movement of the time, David Pichaske argues that "the music saves us. It offers the most accurate record of persons and places and spirits. More important, it provides a common history. We may not have been in Montgomery, Alabama, but we have all heard or heard sung 'We Shall Overcome'"(xix-xx).

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all else as the sphere of the private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. (Habermas 27)

Habermas' normative ideal became the English bourgeoisie of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries in particular. In a section of the book titled "The Model Case of British Development," Habermas outlines a series of events which produced the ideal conditions for the development of a bourgeois public sphere including the rise of the textile, metal and paper industry which resulted in a newly rich bourgeois class, the founding of the Bank of England, the elimination of censorship which "made the influx of rational-critical arguments into the press possible and allowed the latter to evolve into an instrument with whose aid political decisions could be brought before the new forum of the public," and "the first cabinet government which marked a new stage in the development of Parliament" (57-58). Notably, the English coffeehouses "were considered to be seedbeds of unrest" (Habermas 59). For Habermas, the English coffeehouse, similar to the French *salon*, became a "center[] of criticism – literary at first, then also political – in which began to emerge, between aristocratic society and bourgeois intellectuals, a certain parity of the educated" (32). Although the second half of the book traces the demise of the public sphere in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries due to the increasing commodification of public opinion, it is often to the first half of the book where Habermas describes the rise of the public sphere that subsequent critics have turned. Indeed, as Craig Calhoun candidly notes in his introduction to a collection of essays published in honour of the publication of the English translation of the book, "the second half of Structural Transformation is less satisfying than the first. If the early chapters succeed in recovering a valuable critical ideal from the classical bourgeois public sphere, Habermas ultimately cannot find a way to ground his hopes for its realization very effectively in his account of the social institutions of advanced or organized capitalism" (29). It is my argument that Habermas cannot realize his hopes for a public sphere in the twentieth century because his concept can only exist within a structure of nostalgia.

The structural function of the restaurant and the sixties scene as the objects of loss in the Mitchell and Tyson songs reveals the structure of nostalgia at work in the Habermasian public sphere. As the *Bildung* narrative tells us, loss enables the consolidation of the liberal subject. I have been trying to put together an understanding of the loss in these songs as not that of its ostensible object, girlhood or youth, but rather that of a potentiality. I then suggested that this potentiality consists not of individual possibility, but of a collective or communal one and that this sense of communal potentiality lies in an understanding of the Habermasian public sphere. These songs in their singularity open up the way in which the Habermasian notion of the public sphere is structured by nostalgia.

Before discussing this nostalgia, let me first trace the way in which Habermas' concept has traveled. His idealism has not remained circumscribed to the bourgeois public to which he first attributes the public sphere. Although Habermas has been criticized for being too idealistic,[8] a number of writers continue to use the idea of the public sphere in its idealized state, and often with little or no reference to the specificities of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. When Nyan Shah refers to a "subaltern public sphere" in his discussion of medical health practices in San Francisco's Chinatown, he is not referring to propertied bourgeois white men engaging in rational-critical debate, but to the possibility of a common discursive space outside the dominant systems of governance which challenges and resists governing regimes. When Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson write of a "transnational public sphere" (48), they are referring to a space of geographically unbounded cultural exchange, largely through mass media. They suggest that

> mass media pose the clearest challenge to orthodox [anthropological] notions of culture. National, regional and village boundaries have, of course, never contained culture in the way that the anthropological representations have often implied. But the existence of a *transnational public sphere* means that the fiction that such

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[8] Geoff Eley's "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures" summarizes much of this critique noting that Habermas idealizes the normative category of the bourgeois subject at the expense of attention to other popular social movements: "On the one hand, the actual pursuit of communicative rationality via the modalities of the public sphere at the end of the eighteenth century reveals a far richer social history than Habermas's conception of a specifically bourgeois emancipation allows; on the other hand, Habermas's concentration on *Öffentlichkeit* as a specifically *bourgeois* category subsumes forms of popular democratic mobilization that were already present as contending and subversive alternatives to the classical liberal organizations of civil society in which Habermas's ideal of the public sphere is confined" (330-331). Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt's The Public Sphere and Experience explores the possibilities of a proletarian public sphere which Habermas more or less ignores throughout his analysis. Eley also raises the problem of Habermas' gender blindness, his idealizing of the public sphere as particularly male space. Feminists such as Joan Landes, Nancy Fraser, Carol Pateman and Marie Fleming in particular have taken up some of the issues involved in this idealizing and argued for the constitutive role of gender in the conception of the public sphere.

> boundaries enclose cultures and regulate cultural exchange can no longer be sustained. (48 my emphasis)

Similarly, when Shirley Lim, Larry Smith and Wimal Dissanayake write of a "transnational Asia Pacific public sphere" in their book, Transnational Asia Pacific: Gender, Culture and the Public Sphere, they are referring to a space of exchange, particularly of cultural commodities, which is public in that it is, at least in theory, democratically accessible. In their introduction to the volume, Lim, Smith and Dissanayake explain their use of the term public sphere while recognizing that the concept they borrow is a Habermasian one specific to Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth century:

> The concept of the public sphere allows us to understand better the nature of cultural production in the transnational Asia Pacific region at the present historical conjuncture and to explore the ways in which cultural products make interventions into ongoing debates regarding culture, politics, and society. The pioneering work of Jurgen Habermas has resulted in widespread interest in the concept of the public sphere, which works to foreground issues of democratization, public participation, and oppositionality. Habermas has delineated a set of forces and institutions that emerged in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe that he sees as vital to a comprehension of democratic discourse and the emergence of oppositionality… This notion of a public sphere as separate from state and civil society is central to the project in this volume. By investigating the issues of gender, cultural identity, sites of

> resistance, public negotiations of meaning, the essays gathered here focus on the vitally important public sphere in the transnational Asia Pacific region. (5-6)

I have cited Lim, Smith and Dissanayake at length because I am interested in the way they attempt to bridge the problem of using a concept specific to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe in order to describe late-twentieth century transnational Asia Pacific literary and political critical discourses. Made analogous with gender and culture, the public sphere has become, in this usage, a generalized space of oppositionality which functions through the laudable means of democracy and public participation. Like Shah's subaltern public sphere, what the public sphere might be is taken as something of a given. In the sense that the Habermasian public sphere has been closely related to the rise of literary criticism as an institution, Lim, Smith and Dissanayake's volume can certainly be understood as part of a transnational Asia Pacific sphere. However, they argue that their essays "focus on the vitally important public sphere in the transnational Asia Pacific region" and this is another matter altogether (6). Rather than contributing to the public sphere through intellectual debate, the volume promises to focus on the public sphere, to produce the public sphere as an object of analysis. In this way, the editors of Transnational Asia Pacific suggest an understanding of the idea of the public sphere as something of a catch-all space for a diverse jumble of issues including gender, cultural identity, public negotiations of meaning and so on.

When I first began research for this chapter, I was surprised by the disjuncture between these almost casual uses of the phrase "the public sphere," and Habermas' own almost painfully particular use of the term. When the "bourgeois" is dropped from "the bourgeois public sphere" and all kinds of other adjectives substituted in its place, including "feminist," "transnational," "transnational Asia Pacific" and "subaltern," the idealism of Habermas' portrayal has become portable. These uses of the idea of the public sphere have taken the Habermasian ideal and left behind his critique: the demise of the public sphere in the twentieth century due to the increasing commodification of public discourse and what he sees as the devolution of the public sphere into public opinion. One of the exceptions, and perhaps the most sophisticated appropriation of the public sphere is Thomas Holt's argument for a black public sphere and the eventual publication of The Black Public Sphere by the Black Public Sphere Collective.[9] Extending Bruce Robbins' and Nancy Fraser's arguments for thinking about a plurality of public and counterpublic spheres, Holt suggests in his afterword to the collection that

> the notion of *a* public sphere, or spheres, can provide a powerful entry into the interrelatedness of matters that – within the disciplinary fragmentation of the academy's normal science – might appear disconnected… Moreover, this rubric, which is theoretically a space defined equally by speakers and listeners, leaders and followers, material resources and discursive performances, might recast the stubborn tensions between structure and agency that burden so much of contemporary social theory. ("Mapping" 326)

Holt closes by recognizing that "the black public sphere is partly the creature of the political economy of a global, advanced capitalist order, but in the past it has offered – and may yet again offer – space for critique and transformation of that order" ("Mapping" 328). It is partly because I share the Black Public Sphere Collective's optimism for alternative spaces of critique that I want to put the idea of the public sphere to the test in what follows. The appropriation of the public sphere is not simply a case of "using the master's tools," but also one of the difficulties of complicity. As Houston Baker notes, there is a certain irony in using a concept that had been originally intended to describe the political organization of propertied white men who counted black people as part of their property (13). Baker, Holt and other members of the Black Public Sphere collective put forward a compelling argument for thinking about alternative public spheres which reappropriate the Habermasian concept. However, because the world is not just black and white, because we cannot simply turn dichotomies upside-down, I wonder about the cost of the reappropriation. As Holt acknowledges, "it must be remembered [that] the public sphere had a historically specific provenance and development: it cannot simply be mapped onto contemporary African-American lifeworlds" ("Mapping" 326). While the Collective's response to this problem has been to mark out a separate black sphere of experience, I wonder if we do not need to pause yet again on the historical contingencies of the bourgeois sphere and the ways in which its predications and founding contradictions might reveal further layers of complexity. There is a fine line between optimism and idealism and it is in the interest of the former that I examine the work of the latter in the idea of the public sphere.

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[9] Although there is no definitive collection or collective under the banner "The Feminist Public Sphere," the feminist critique and recuperation of the public sphere has also been

Of course, it is arguable that the classic public sphere still exists today and that Habermas is, as Craig Calhoun notes, asymmetrical in his treatment of the various historical epochs: "Habermas tends to judge the eighteenth century by Locke and Kant, the nineteenth century by Marx and Mill, and the twentieth century by the typical

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crucial and in many ways the most theoretically nuanced and diverse response to the suburban television viewer… The result is perhaps an overestimation of the degeneration of the public sphere" (33). Significantly, Calhoun points precisely to the sixties as an example of the revitalization of the public sphere in the twentieth century: "The revitalization of a critical political public during the 1960s (and its refusal to quite go away since then) lends further credence to this view" (33).

Despite the historical specificity of the idea, it seems to me that what persists, the reason why the idea of the public sphere continues to resonate and be put to use in all kinds of ways that have little or nothing to do with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, lies precisely in the idealization of the public sphere for which Habermas has been so often derided. There is something very catching in the idea that there might be a public space where people could come together and talk and write about artistic and political issues in the interest of a common, shared sense of goodness. There is understandable appeal in the idea of a place where rational debate and the rigor of convivial conversation prevails, a place which is outside of the state and the market, and yet still capable of influencing the directions of both.

And yet, this view of the public sphere in its idealized sense can only exist in the past. For Habermas, the ideal public sphere can only be located in the London coffeehouses of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. For Mitchell and Tyson, it can only be that which has passed by, that which can no longer be retrieved or recuperated. It is not surprising that Habermas is asymmetrical in his treatment of historical epochs not because of a prejudice against twentieth-century public culture, as Calhoun suggests, but because it can exist only in an irretrievable past. It can exist only in a structure of

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Habermasian concept. I will take this critique up in more detail later in this chapter.

nostalgia. What the Mitchell and Tyson songs reveal in their singularity is the structural nostalgia which manages the predications and the contradictions embedded within the concept of the public sphere itself. This is why Tyson's song ties its object of loss so intimately to the spectacular incineration of the Chinese restaurant. The space of potentiality, the promise of a public sphere of political and social change, can only be lost if it cannot be returned to. It can only be idealized if it no longer exists.

Although Susan Stewart's analysis on the workings of nostalgia has been criticized for its practice of reducing all things to narrative, its failure to attend to the materiality of its subject matter,[10] her reading is particularly accurate in the case of the Habermasian public sphere and its subsequent permutations, including the one alluded to in the Mitchell and Tyson songs. It is precisely because the nostalgia in this case is narratological, because it circumvents the material conditions of its own enablement, that Stewart's analysis works so well here. Stewart's understanding of nostalgia accounts for the necessity of loss in the Mitchell and Tyson songs; Mitchell and Tyson's nostalgia is grounded in a sadness, a lament, for something that can only exist in narrative. As Stewart puts it:

> Nostalgia is a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience. Rather, it

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[10] Keya Ganguly notes that Stewart's narrativization risks occluding the materiality of her subject matter. Citing a passage in which Stewart collapses the actual process of being born with a discussion of the emergence of subjectivity, Ganguly argues that "this kind of narratological explication depends upon dissimulating a materialist interest in the world of objects and of reality (however qualified). In actuality, the argument is entirely analogical, even more than it is metaphorical. It is predicated on a presumed though not necessarily established resemblance among elements of the series posited (cell, body, enclosure, birth, separation, loss, signifier, meaning, and so on)… In the process, [Stewart] blurs the very line between truths and their representation" (131).

> remains behind and before that experience. Nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually seeks to reproduce itself as a felt lack. Hostile to history and its invisible origins, and yet longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin, nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a future-past, a past which has only ideological reality. (23)

The past which Mitchell and Tyson seek exists only in narrative, in the intertexts of 1950s love songs. "Unchained Melody" and "Canadian Sunset" are about longing, about hungering for something that itself can exist only in narrative. In that sense, both songs express a longing, a sadness that is without an object because they have already narrativized the object. In their singularity, these songs reveal the structure of nostalgia endemic to the Habermasian public sphere. The public sphere, in Habermas' ideal sense, can only exist as an ideal. And in that idealization, it can only exist in a past that is not only historically inaccurate, but, to echo Stewart's phrase, hostile to history. The critics who attack Habermas for a lack of attention to history can only be right if historical accuracy was a goal of the conception of the public sphere in the first place.[11] One of the reasons why the idea of the public sphere has become so portable, appropriated so widely with so little respect for the historical specificity which Habermas himself insisted on, lies in its formulation in a structure of nostalgia. It is not just that these songs are nostalgic or that Habermas is nostalgic, but that nostalgia is structural to their idealization.

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[11] Although I do not think Habermas aimed to provide a comprehensive historical survey of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French, German and English public spheres, I also do not want to diminish the important historical work that has been unleashed in the critiques that followed. Harry C. Boyte argues that Habermas' "account is meant in a sense to prompt historical investigation. This it has certainly achieved" (343). Also, Joan Landes notes, Habermas' project inspired both a series of historical critiques, but also a renewed interest in histories of public spheres: "The path taken by the independent European reception of the book leads towards feminist and critical theorists who are reconstructing the original model of the public sphere, and to those scholars who are charting the possibilities for what is variously called 'new historicism' or the 'new cultural and intellectual history'" (92). Landes' own book reconstructed the eighteenth-

One of the most depressing things about utopias lies in recognizing the ideological realities which generate them. One person's utopia always seems to come at the cost of another's. Maybe this is why, in the first world, we still turn longingly back to the 1960s, why the Mitchell and Tyson songs struck a chord amongst such a large community of listeners and became so popular, even though we know that the folk music revolution was largely one that catered to a generation of middle class suburban white people. Perhaps the idealism of that decade's enmeshment of popular music with social protest and calls for cultural change – and its subsequent demise – is best summed up in the nostalgic title of Robert Cantwell's history of 1960s folk music, When We Were Good.[12] It is in the goodwill of Habermas' ideal that we can get some sense of the seeds of its undoing.

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century French public sphere and emphasized in particular the crucial role of women in this sphere. Similarly, both David Zaret's call for further attention to the role of religion and science as well as Mary Ryan's conception of early US feminist uses of the public sphere provide further historical facets to the Habermasian public sphere.

[12] Cantwell's account has been considered as definitive and has influenced many ethnomusicologists who came after him. What interests me in particular is Cantwell's insistence on the "goodness" of sixties folk music culture. Noting the political influences on the folk revival, Cantwell argues that left politics had less influence than some might argue, but that a general desire to "be good" permeated the revival: "For we were good, and wanted to be" (22). In Cantwell's view, a general desire for transcendent goodness superceded overt political concerns: "Nothing was more tiresome, once the revival was in full swing, than to endure the contributions of some antediluvian communist songster with a bag of 'banker and bosses' songs, stirring as they must have been in their time,

While it is not at all original to say that Habermas believes in the Enlightenment project,[13] let me point out that his choice to locate the birth of a radical common space of oppositionality in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe belies a valorization of particular notions of reason and rationality. The story has to start somewhere and Habermas began with the late-seventeenth century. If he had gone far enough back along the lines of historical accuracy, he could have made the argument that the public sphere began with the commons of Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker's description. But he didn't start there. Not because he was only interested in the bourgeois class and paid scant attention to those below,[14] but because the ideal public sphere is tied to a particular notion of rational discourse. As Terry Eagleton notes, "Habermas believes, perhaps too sentimentally, that what it is to live well is somehow already secretly embedded in that which makes us most distinctively what we are: language" (Ideology 408). But it is this sentimentality around the liberating possibilities of rational discourse which belies a tremendous investment in, again to put it crudely, all the good things about the Enlightenment and, with it, all of the bad. I take up the public sphere in its mistaken, that

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who imagined that the labour movement of the thirties had come back to life… What had been their movement became our revival – and we insisted on assigning our own meanings to it" (22).

[13] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer were perhaps the first to officially declare The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere to be too tied to the Enlightenment concepts of reason and rational discourse. Craig Calhoun notes that the book "originated as Habermas' *Habilitationschrift* (thesis for postdoctoral qualification required of German professors) and was intended for submission to Max Horkheimer (and Theodor Adorno) at Frankfurt. Horkheimer and Adorno, however, apparently thought it at once insufficiently critical of the illusions and dangerous tendencies of an Enlightenment conception of democratic public life, especially mass society, and too radical in its politically focused call for an attempt to go beyond liberal constitutional protections in pursuit of truer democracy. Habermas successfully submitted it to Wolfgang Abendroth at Marburg" (4).

[14] Please see Negt and Kluge's The Public Sphere and Experience.

is idealized, sense in order to highlight the ways in which Habermas' historically specific claim has engineered within its construction the failure to realize its potential. Habermas' analysis actually invites historically inaccurate appropriations because it never comes to terms with the predication in a system of exploitative labour production and its internal contradictions rooted in the desire to transcend the discriminations of class (and implicitly race and gender) while consolidating a ruling class in the process.

Let me deal then with the predication and the contradiction of the Habermasian public sphere in turn.

One of the most exciting promises of the Habermasian public sphere lies in the suggestion that there could be, indeed has been, a place where rational discourse between free and equal subjects could influence the course of civil governance. One of its biggest contradictions lies in the presumption of a space of discourse that discriminates solely on the bases of intellect and reason but which actually works to consolidate discrimination on the bases of class, race and gender. The space of critique is ostensibly open to all who would engage in it, but its criteria of inclusion occludes its ideological function as a means of re-naming the white, male, propertied subject as the reasoned subject. This is, of course, Eagleton's argument in The Function of Criticism. He notes that literary criticism, born in the coffeehouse of Addison and Steele and their various contemporaries, began as a critique of the absolutist state but ended up creating a bridge between the aristocracy and the emerging bourgeois class:

> The petty proprietors of a commodity known as "opinion" assemble together for its regulated interchange, at once miming in purer, non-dominative form the exchanges of bourgeois economy and contributing to the political apparatus which

> sustains it. The public sphere thereby constructed is at once universal and class-specific: all may in principle participate in it, but only because the class-determined criteria of what counts as significant participation are always unlodgeably in place. The currency of this realm is neither title nor property but rationality – a rationality in fact articulable only by those with the social interests which property generates. But because that rationality is not the possession of a *single* class within the hegemonic social bloc – because it is the product of an intensive conversation *between* those dominant classes, a discourse for the Tatler and the Spectator are particular names – it is possible to view it as universal, and hence to prise the definition of the gentlemen free of any too rigidly genetic or class-specific determinants. (Eagleton Function 26)

The public sphere is insistently classless because it needs to bring together two previously segregated classes of society, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. It could not be classless for those without property because, as Eagleton wryly notes, "Only those with an interest can be disinterested" (Function 16). Of course, I am aware that Habermas insisted that the public sphere of his discussion was a distinctly bourgeois one and that it never promised admittance to those without property.

Moreover, Habermas recognizes the contradiction of his ideal public sphere in terms of its exclusions and the problems of access. The public sphere's legitimacy, he acknowledges, rests on its inclusiveness to those who had "interests," property:

> If everyone, as it might appear, had the chance to become a "citizen," then only citizens should be allowed into the political public sphere, without this restriction amounting to an abandonment of the principle of publicity. On the contrary, only

> property owners were in a position to form a public that could legislatively protect the foundations of the existing property order; only they had private interests – each his own—which automatically converged onto the common interest in the preservation of a civil society as a private sphere. Only from them, therefore, was an effective representation of the general interest to be expected, since it was not necessary for them in any way to leave their private existence behind to exercise their public role. For the private person, there was no break between *homme* and *citoyen*, as long as *homme* was simultaneously an owner of private property who as *citoyen* was to protect the stability of the property order as a private one. (87)

The acceptance of a bourgeois public sphere which is so clearly self-serving belies the promise of potentiality. In other words, it is okay to maintain and protect a social order that revolves around the ownership of property and literacy as long as everyone *has a chance* to own property and become literate. In his discussion of the Kantian public sphere, from which "the idea of the bourgeois public sphere attained its theoretically fully developed form" (Habermas 102), Habermas notes that the exclusion of those without property could be rationalized given the existence of subjective possibility. For Kant, and consequently Habermas, "the propertyless were excluded from the public of private people engaged in critical political debate without thereby violating the principle of publicity. In this sense they were not citizens at all, but persons who with talent, industry, and luck some day might be able to attain that status" (Habermas 111). Echoing the potentiality bound up in the production of the *Bildungsroman*, the loss of potentiality becomes the pre-condition of the public sphere's constitution. It can only ever promise the possibility of access but the withdrawal of that promise is actually the defining moment of its consolidation. The public sphere needs to be exclusive in order to be what it is, which is why it can only exist in a structure of nostalgia. It can only exist in the loss of potentiality.

Habermas concedes that a public sphere which is not really open to the public cannot be rightfully called a public sphere: "The public sphere of civil society stood or fell with the principle of universal access. A public sphere from which specific groups would be *eo ipso* excluded was less than merely incomplete; it was not a public sphere at all" (85). Habermas takes up in detail Marx's critique in "The Jewish Question," a critique which is precisely about the contradictions of ideal equality in the public sphere,[15] but ultimately understands Marx as calling for something like a socialist public sphere, for the expansion of the sphere of political deliberation to those without property which then inverted the original basis of the public sphere.[16] In that sense, Habermas' sense of the demise of the public sphere lies within its expansion and the consequential dilution of its original focus. This diagnosis betrays a nostalgia for the good old days of a limited bourgeois public sphere. For Habermas, "[t]he *principle* of the public sphere, that is, critical publicity, seemed to lose its strength in the measure that it expanded as a *sphere* and even undermined the private realm" (140). Although the contradictions of the public sphere are clear to Habermas, his analysis still slides over the possibility that the literate and propertied community, those who form the members of his ideal public sphere, engaged in the pursuit of literary criticism and the production of public opinion, did so in the interest of maintaining their own hegemony.

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[15] Although Habermas does not cite this particular passage, he draws most of his reading of Marx from the early writings and, in particular, "The Jewish Question" wherein Marx writes: "The state in its own way abolishes distinctions based on *birth, rank, education* and *occupation* when it declares birth, rank, education and occupation to be *non-political* distinctions, when it proclaims that every member of the people is an equal participant in popular sovereignty regardless of these distinctions, when it treats all those elements which go to make up the actual life of the people from the standpoint of the state. Nevertheless the state allows private property, education, and occupation to *act* and assert their *particular* nature in *their* own way, i.e. as private property, as education and as occupation. Far from abolishing these *factual* distinctions, the state presupposes them in order to exist, it only experiences itself as a *political state* and asserts its *universality* in opposition to these elements" (219).

[16] Habermas writes: "According to this new model, autonomy was no longer based on private property; it could in principle no longer be grounded in the private sphere. Private autonomy was a derivative of the original which alone constituted the public of a society's citizens in the exercise of the functions of the socialistically expanded public sphere" (128).

The issues of inclusion and exclusion are not the same as the problem of the contradiction of the constitution of the public sphere. Theoretically, the public sphere could include everyone, once they had attained the minimum criteria of its inclusion which, in the case of the ideal bourgeois public sphere, is property ownership and literacy. However, the contradiction lies in the function of the public sphere as a means of veiling class interests under the guise of rationality. You can be a part of the public sphere as long as you are a rational subject. The un-named condition of this rationality, as Eagleton points out, is that of being a member either of the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie. Reading the enlarged or democratized public sphere of the nineteenth century through Marx, Habermas notes that "[u]nder such conditions, then, the public sphere was also presumed to be able to realize in earnest what it had promised from the start – the subjection of political domination as domination of human beings over human beings, to reason" (128). This valorization of reason conceals a practice of discrimination meant to unite the ruling classes. The issue then is not so much about access, who is or is not possibly a member of the public sphere, but the rationalization of domination under the guise of reason.

The feminist critique of Habermas has argued that this use of reason is deeply gendered and that the public sphere, in Marie Fleming's words, "actually presupposes gender exclusion" (119). Building from Carol Pateman's earlier critique which argued that the oppression of women was constitutive of the public sphere,[17] Fleming notes that, in addition to the private and the public, Habermas turns to a third sphere of discourse, the intimate sphere. Where the public was concerned with the literary and the political and the private with the economic, the intimate sphere relied on the notion of a patriarchal conjugal family. For Fleming, Habermas' description of the bourgeois use of public reason was not "a continuation of the salon-based, rational-critical public debate. According to Habermas, bourgeois subjectivity was structurally tied to a concept of 'humanity' that originated as a feeling of 'human closeness' in the innermost sphere of the conjugal family" (122). The bourgeois use of public reason rests then on an understanding of humanity based on the patriarchal conjugal family.

While I am compelled by the feminist critique of Habermas – in a general survey of the literature, it seems that feminists have been some of the most vocal critics of the Habermasian public sphere – I have also been struck by their recuperation of the public sphere as an end product of the critique. Feminists have engaged with Habermas' notion of the public sphere but one of the most common themes of their critique lies in the argument for the inclusion of women as members of the public sphere and of the constitutive role of women in the formation of the public sphere. Although Fleming's critique of reason reveals the patriarchal function of that reason, she closes with the acknowledgement that the demands of "women's historical claims to rights to inclusion and equality" in the public sphere are, despite its patriarchal foundations, nonetheless valid (134). Similarly, Joan Landes' study of the French *salon* demonstrated the integral role that French women played in the emergence of the eighteenth-century French public sphere, again shoring up the idea of the public sphere. In her introduction to Feminists Read Habermas Johanna Meehan argues that Habermas "provides a model of subjectivity and an account of the pragmatic presuppositions of discursive validity, against which actual political and person relations and discourses can be measured" (2). For Meehan, "Habermas locates the emancipatory moment of modernity, which Weber and the earlier members of the Frankfurt School missed, in the increasing reflexivity made possible by advances in communicative rationality and in its institutionalization in law and in political and moral discourses" (6). Looking at the women's movement in the US in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Mary Ryan contends that "Habermas's construction of the public sphere had a singular advantage for feminists: it freed politics from the iron grasp of the state, which, by virtue of the long denial of franchise…effectively defined the public in masculine terms" (261). Ryan traces the way in which women in the US used the public sphere to gain access to public space and the "tenacious efforts of women to subvert these restrictions [to full citizenship] and to be heard in public testify to the power of public ideals, that persistent impulse to have a voice in some space open and accessible to all where they could be counted in the general interest" (284). Reading Habermas' discourse model against Hannah Arendt's Agonistic idea of public space and the liberal tradition of public space as public dialogue, Seyla Benhabib argues that the Habermasian "discourse model is the only one that is compatible with the emancipatory

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[17] In The Sexual Contract Carol Pateman argues that the bourgeois social contract

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secured civil rights for men at the expense of those for women.

aspirations of new social movements, like the women's movement" (95). Finally, Nancy Fraser criticizes the use of the bourgeois public sphere as a normative ideal and poses the possibility of a multiplicity of competing and alternative public spheres, suggesting that there are "subaltern counterpublics" which

> are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. Perhaps the most striking example is the late-twentieth-century U.S feminist subaltern counterpublic, with its variegated array of journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lecture series, research centers, academic programs, conferences, conventions, festivals, and local meeting places. (123)

In an echo of Ryan's discussion, Fraser's concept of alternative/counter- public spheres and her example of the US women's movement as an alternative public sphere also suggests an investment in the idea of the public sphere itself.

I have discussed the feminist recuperation of the public sphere at length because the simultaneous critique and recuperation of the Habermasian public sphere can tell us a lot about the way in which Habermas' notion of the public sphere has circulated since its inception in 1961. It suggests that the concept has been very useful for subordinate social groups, such as the feminist community, who want to think through the possibilities of oppositionality through discursive means. It is also revealing of the way in which this sustained critique of the Habermasian public sphere from a coherent and well-theorized intellectual position, feminism, does not want to dispense with the notion altogether.

Further, feminisim's recuperation of the public sphere manages to retain a notion of a "public" that is variegated rather than homongenous.

One of the uses that the feminist critique has for the Habermasian public sphere lies in its hopeful proposal of a space where women can push to become fully participatory critical subjects. It provides a way of imagining a feminist community that can influence the governing of a civil society while strengthening the bonds of that community through rational discourse. I cannot help but notice that the feminist critique and recuperation of Habermas is still a largely white feminist project. By "white feminist" I do not mean only that most of the women engaging in critical work on the public sphere might be white, but that the recuperation of the Habermasian public sphere belies an investment in the apparatuses of whiteness – reason and rationality – which have been used again and again to oppress non-white peoples. Let me be clear: I am struck by the strength and breadth of the feminist critique and do not want to take away from the important work it has done in demanding a reconsideration of gender and the roles of women in the public sphere. However, I am skeptical of the recuperation of a public space that continues to be premised on assumed notions of rational discourse. Where the *Bildungsroman* consolidates "free" or liberal subjects who can participate in the Habermasian public sphere, the women's *Bildungsroman* consolidates a gendered subject who can participate in the feminist public sphere. Both "Chinese Café" and "The Night the Chinese Restaurant Burned Down" consolidate a particular vision of female subjectivity within the public sphere of the 1960s and that of second wave feminism. However, this consolidation occurs at the expense of a radical questioning of the contradiction of the public sphere – its use of reason as a tool for occluding the uniting of the ruling classes – and the material conditions upon which it is predicated.

We know from postcolonial critique that the rationalization of domination through the valorization of reason cannot be innocent.[18] What Habermas forgets, and what has not yet been explored in the discussions of the Habermasian public sphere, is that the bourgeois public sphere does not emerge from nothing, that there are material conditions which enable its emergence, specifically, European colonialism and imperialism. Thinking through the lens of production and materialist inquiry, one of the central predications of the public sphere of Habermas' analysis becomes apparent in the aroma of the coffee that drifts through the air of the English coffeehouses, the sweet taste of sugar that tempers that bitterness of the coffee, the tea which had become cheap enough for the bourgeoisie to make a daily drink, the *chocolat chaud* available in the salons. Would there be a Habermasian public sphere without a plantation economy providing the coffee, tea, sugar and cocoa which were the quiet witnesses to the spirited rational debate of Habermas' vision – without a plantation economy which enabled a class of people to take part in the leisure of coffeehouse culture?

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[18] While the critique of Enlightenment reason can be seen as implicit in a wide range of postcolonial critical theory, Gayatri Spivak's critique is perhaps the most pointed in her deconstruction of Kant in A Critique of Postcolonial Reason where she examines what she calls the "double bind of practical reason" (25). Noting that Kant's notion of reason is both free and bounded by an understanding of what it means to be human, Spivak pushes Kant at the limits of his universalism by tracking the figure of what she calls the "native informant" in his text. Please see in particular p. 17-37. Additionally, the final chapter of Srinivas Aravamudan's Tropicolitans contains a reading of the Enlightenment from the postcolonial perpsective, not as a critique, but as a project of locating the places where postcolonial subjects appropriated the logic of the Enlightenment. In particular Aravamudan explores the way in which Toussaint L'Ouverture "tropicalized" the Enlightenment and more generally, the way in which the revolutionaries in Haiti reworked French Enlightenment thought in order to support their anticolonial work.

In Culture and Imperialism Edward Said makes a similar point regarding the role Jane Austen's Mansfield Park in the English literary canon: "The Bertrams could not have been possible without the slave trade, sugar and the colonial planter class… Having read Mansfield Park as part of the structure of an expanding imperialist venture, one cannot simply restore it to the canon of 'great literary masterpieces' – to which it most certainly belongs – and leave it at that" (94-95). Having considered the fact that the public sphere which Habermas idealizes – "Dryden, surrounded by the new generation of writers, joined in the battle of the 'ancients and the moderns' at Will's, Addison and Steele… at Button's… the Rotary Club presided over by Milton's secretary [where] Marvell and Pepys met with Harrington" (Habermas 32) – could not have existed without a plantation economy supporting and enabling it, we cannot put aside the foundational predication of the notion of the public sphere in an economy of labour exploitation. The dependence of the European Enlightenment on the products of colonial expansion is a point that Fernando Ortiz made more than six decades ago in his ground-breaking anthropology of tobacco and Cuban society, Cuban Counterpoint. As Ortiz wryly notes,

> [i]t is as though [tobacco, chocolate, coffee and tea] had been sent to Europe from the four corners of the earth by the devil to revive Europe when "the time came," when that continent was ready to save the spirituality of reason from burning itself out and give the senses their due once more… the tobacco of the Antilles, the chocolate of Mexico, the coffee of Africa, and the tea of China. Nicotine, theobromine, caffeine, and theine – these four alkaloids were put at the service of humanity to make reason more alert… solace for the senses and subtle nervous

> stimulants, all arrived at the same time to prolong the Renaissance. They were supernatural reinforcements for those Revolutionary ideas. (206-207)

Ortiz's deployment of the image of Europe in a state of drugged and drunken stupor awakened by the mass importation of coffee, tea, tobacco and chocolate underscores the necessity of colonial trade to the "mental jousts which initiated the modern age in Europe" (Ortiz 206). His ironic method of animating commodities and personifying continents touches at the heart of the material conditions which made possible the lively exchanges at Button's, Will's, the Rotary Club and the thousands of other coffeehouses[19] which constituted the Habermasian ideal public sphere. In his assessment of Habermas and the public sphere, Calhoun notes that "Habermas is well aware, of course, though it is not a heavily developed theme, that the bourgeois public sphere was oriented not just toward defense of civil society against the state, but also toward the maintenance of a system of domination within civil society" (39). However, it seems as though very little attention has been paid to the predication of the bourgeois public sphere on a system of domination external to civil society, of colonialism and imperialism. The ideal public sphere could only exist in a space of capital that rests on surplus value and commodity fetishism; it is supposed to be a free exchange of ideas, but the conditions of its freedom are underwritten by the "unfree" spaces of exploitation, colonialism and imperialism.

Screening Chinese: Obstructions and Projections

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[19] Drawing from the work of L. Stephen and H. Reinhold, Habermas counts the existence of more than three thousand coffeehouses in London by the first decade of the eighteenth century (Habermas 32).

While I believe there are wide-ranging implications to re-thinking the public sphere in terms of its predication on a plantation economy specifically and colonialism and imperialism generally,[20] I am turning to this predication in order to think through what it means for the texts under discussion, what it means for the lost public sphere of the Mitchell and Tyson songs. This predication suggests that the use of the Chinese restaurant in these songs is not innocent, casual or coincidental, but revealing. It opens up for us the suggestion of a knowledge of a world beyond Maggie and Carol, the five and dime and the jukebox playing "Unchained Melody," a world which the Chinese restaurant is a barbed cue to the assertion of diasporic presence in the absence of any mention of diasporic subjects. I want to look at this predication in terms of how we can understand the Chinese restaurant in these two songs. To return to some questions with which I began this chapter, why are these songs set in the Chinese restaurant at all? Why not simply a local diner? Why is it important to name the presence of something Chinese only to never get past relegating the Chinese restaurant to a 1950s sentimentality which seems to have nothing to do with Chineseness or Chinese subjects?

One way of making sense of the curious use of the Chinese restaurant in both the Mitchell and Tyson songs lies in Said's argument about Mansfield Park. Both songs clearly identify the Chinese restaurant or Chinese café as a central element through their references to it in the title of the song. Although the restaurant seems to be little more than a setting for the narratives in the songs, there is a strange contrast between the centrality of the restaurant in the song titles and the way Mitchell and Tyson collapse the restaurant with 1950s love songs, side-stepping its Chineseness at the same time that it names it. This double movement of naming a space of otherness and then sidestepping it at the same time is not unlike Austen's treatment of Antigua. As Said notes, what is important about the relationship of Mansfield Park (both the place and the novel) to Antigua is the contrast between the texture and detail with which Austen treats the domestic world, and the presumptive silences about the external world of the plantation. We never see Sir Thomas in Antigua in the novel but his infrequent trips there are not out of the ordinary and they are accepted as a fact of life at Mansfield Park. Noting the connection between the Antiguan plantation in Mansfield Park, the West African Rubber Company in E.M. Forster's Howard's End and the San Tomé mine in Joseph Conrad's Nostromo, among others, Said argues that

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[20] In the course of my research, I have been surprised by the lack of material on the predication of the Habermasian public sphere on colonialism and imperialism. As I note throughout this chapter, there is no shortage of material engaging with Habermas critically on all kinds of fronts, including a sustained feminist critique and an extension of his thinking in the field of media and communications studies (the set of essays in Craig Calhoun's Habermas and the Public Sphere provides and excellent overview of many of

> [i]f we think ahead to these other novels, Sir Thomas's Antigua readily acquires a slightly greater density than the discrete, reticent appearances it makes in the pages of Mansfield Park. And already our reading of the novel begins to open up at those points where ironically Austen was most economical and her critics most (dare one say it?) negligent. Her "Antigua" is there not just a slight but a definite way of marking the outer limits of what [Eric] Williams calls domestic improvements, or a quick allusion to the mercantile venturesomeness of acquiring overseas dominions as a source for local fortunes, or one reference among many attesting to a historical sensibility suffused not just with manners and courtesies

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the critiques). However, I have not yet come across a sustained and detailed critique of

> but with contests of ideas, struggles with Napoleonic France, awareness of seismic economic and social change during a revolutionary period in world history. (93-94)

It is precisely in the lack of reference, in the "very odd combination of casualness and stress [that] Austen reveals herself to be *assuming* (just as Fanny Price assumes, in both senses of the word) the importance of an empire to the situation at home" (Said 89). Similarly, the lack of reference to Chineseness in the Mitchell and Tyson songs assumes the significance of the Chineseness via the Chinese restaurant to the work of these songs, the consolidation of a white, female liberal subjectivity.

While Said's analysis identifies Austen's references to Antigua as revealing of the centrality of empire to domestic British life, let me suggest that Mitchell's and Tyson's references to the Chinese restaurant reveal the function of Chineseness in late-twentieth-century liberal subjectivity. The relationship is, in many ways, somewhat more obscure than that of Austen and Empire, but it is so because one of the functions of the Chinese restaurant in these songs is precisely to obscure the predications of the lost space of ideal community in the songs, the material conditions which enable its emergence as an ideal. The Chinese restaurant also functions as a site of projection, a backdrop where Mitchell and Tyson can impose a narrative of their development as young artists, their *Bildung* narratives, onto the empty canvas of the restaurant. I suggest that the Chinese restaurant, and through it the presence of Chineseness, functions as a screen for white liberal subjectivity in both senses of the word – first, in the sense of screening out the unpleasantness of past exploitations and, second, as a screen for the projection of a

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the Habermasian public sphere from the perspective of postcolonial and colonial studies.

coherent white identity. As Moretti recognizes, the work of the *Bildung* narrative lies in a commitment to "a present that is 'individualized,' and is the constant work of *reorganization* of what has taken place, as well as a *projection* of what is to come" (44, my emphasis). In this work of reconfiguring the past and projecting the hope of consolidated subjectivity, the Chinese restaurant is crucially situated both as a useful obstruction and as a site of projection.

As a screening out of an unpleasant and unmentionable past, Mitchell and Tyson use the Chinese restaurant as a way of separating the past from the present. As I have already noted earlier, in these songs the restaurant *is* the space of 1950s sentimentality; by association, it becomes equivalent to "Unchained Melody" and "Canadian Sunset." The collapsing of the space of the Chinese restaurant with that of a particular time period, through music in this case, serves to delineate specific epochs in the songs. The songs evoke two time periods, the time before the Chinese restaurant burned down, before Mitchell and Tyson left their lives of dreaming on dimes behind, and the time after, the sixties, the explosion and revival of folk music, and Mitchell and Tyson's rise to folk-diva stardom. In the sense that the memory of the Chinese restaurant functions as a screen which capriciously separates the girlhood from womanhood, the past from the present, the use of the restaurant in these songs evokes Freud's notion of the screen memory where the screen memory works to suppress the emergence of another memory. In "Screen Memories" Freud notes that

> [w]henever in a memory the subject himself appears in this way as an object among other objects this contrast between the acting and the recollecting ego may be taken as evidence that the original impression has been worked over. It looks

> as though a memory-trace from childhood had here been translated back into a plastic and visual form at a later date – the date of the memory's arousal. But no reproduction of the original impression has ever entered the subject's consciousness. (321)

Mitchell's and Tyson's recollecting of themselves as "objects among other objects" where they see themselves not from the perspective of themselves as young women, but as an outsider would see them, suggests the way in which this memory of girlhood, to echo Freud again, "has been worked over." However, the screen memory does not block out the past *per se*, but the predications which enable the consolidating narrative of loss, the *Bildung* narrative.

Those predications lie in understanding the public sphere as a concept that is indebted to empire and colonial expansion. As I have argued, exploitative labour relations enable the object of loss, the public sphere, in both songs. Circumventing this predication, the public sphere can exist only within a structure of nostalgia, a nostalgia which, as Susan Stewart proposes, is narratological. It is not just that the public sphere can exist only as a form of the past remembered in the present, but that this process of remembering is a highly crafted narrative, it has been worked over. These narratives of loss which, as we know from Moretti's work on the *Bildungsroman*, consolidate liberal subjectivity, are indebted to the work of empire, to colonialism and imperialism. As *Bildung* narratives, the Mitchell and Tyson songs– the formation of the artist as a young liberal woman – are materially indebted to the exploitation of racialized labour, not just in the sense that there would not be Chinese restaurants in towns such as Fort Macleod and Chatham (where Mitchell and Tyson are respectively from) were it not for the vast importation of Chinese labour during the height of railway-building (read empire-building) activity, but also in the sense that there would be no idealized object of loss, the public sphere, without surplus value produced by exploited labour. Mitchell's acknowledgement of the exploitation of First Nations land in the second verse of the song diverts attention away from her own complicity in these exploitations, shifting the blame to the "[s]hort-sighted businessmen" who, to cite another song of Mitchell's, "paved paradise/ And put up a parking lot" ("Big Yellow Taxi"). The nostalgic narrative of the loss of the public sphere consolidates the *Bildung* narrative. The portrait of Joni Mitchell or Sylvia Tyson as young women about to become artists is the story of what might have been, not what is. They are narratives which rest on the predications of the modal while professing to be narratives of a simple past. That is, under the guise of straightfoward temporal narratives of maturation and development, these narratives depend upon the potentiality of publicity, of the unfulfilled and lost public sphere. Mitchell and Tyson put the Chinese restaurant to use as a screen against the predications of the modal in the aspiration toward the certainties of a singular march through personal history.

Not only do both songs screen out the predications of potentiality, but also the experience of being looked on. The screen memory's positioning of the recollecting subject as an "object among other objects" reveals also the necessity of screening out the memory of being the object of the gaze of the unreadable other, the "inscrutable" Chinese gaze. "Contrary to the model of Western hegemony in which the colonizer is seen as a primary, active 'gaze' subjugating the native as passive 'object,'" Rey Chow argues "that it is actually the colonizer who feels looked at by the native's gaze. This gaze, which is neither a threat nor a retaliation, makes the colonizer 'conscious' of himself, leading to his need to turn this gaze around and look at himself, henceforth 'reflected' in the native-object" (Writing 51). That reflection becomes even clearer in the emptying out of the other. Mitchell's recognition of First Nations land claims and the "paradise" that was paved for a parking lot belies a tendency to rhapsodize conveniently empty spaces. In both the Mitchell and Tyson songs, Chineseness is no longer inscrutable but evacuated.

This emptying out of Chineseness from the Chinese restaurant also serves the restaurant's projective function. The Chinese restaurant is also a screen against which Mitchell and Tyson project the narratives of their development and emergence. Returning to the collapsing of the Chinese restaurant with sentimental 1950s love songs, we recall that Mitchell and Tyson avoid any reference to Chinese subjects or even the Chineseness of the restaurants. In this sense, Mitchell and Tyson obliterate Chineseness from two songs that are ostensibly about Chinese restaurants. The Chinese restaurants must be emptied of their specific histories in order to function as screens which can reflect the projections of Mitchell and Tyson's narratives. More than just a screen against the modalities of the past, the Chinese café is also a site for the projection of an idealism, the ideal narrative of becoming enabled by the loss of an ideal space of community.

The screen is a foil (as opposed to something like a movie screen) which throws into relief the idealized pasts of Joni Mitchell and Sylvia Tyson. For Mitchell and Tyson, what happens is against the screen, not "on" the screen, precisely because Chineseness is the signifier of that which stays put. Collapsed with the sentimentality of post-World War Two Canada, the Chinese restaurant becomes in these songs the place where things do not change, where nothing happens. Both Mitchell and Tyson retain the reference to Chineseness in their songs as a referent for that which remains statically in the past. The collapsing of the space of the restaurant with the sentimentality of 1950s love songs that happens in both songs signals the function of the restaurant as a projective site of an idealized past. The songs do not idealize Chineseness as Chinese,[21] but Chineseness as that which is a fixed element of the past against which Mitchell and Tyson can project their narratives of development and progress.

My use of projection draws from the Freudian conception of projection which centers on a "throwing out of what one refuses either to *recognise* in oneself or to *be* oneself" (Laplanche and Pontalis 354). This is an understanding of Freudian projection in its most general sense.[22] For Freud projection is an externalization of an internal alienation. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud writes that "[t]here will be a tendency to treat [internal stimuli of pain] as though they were acting not from within but from without, in order for it to be possible to apply against them the defensive measures of the barrier against stimuli (*Reizschutz*). This is the origin of projection..." (154). In "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," Freud again notes that "[f]or the pleasure-ego the outside world is divided into a part that is pleasurable, which it has incorporated into itself, and a remainder that is alien to it. A part of itself it has separated off, and this it projects into the external world and regards as hostile" (82). As Laplanche and Pontalis note, Freud's "major contribution" regarding projection lies in understanding it as the proecess whereby "assimilations [such as projecting human qualities onto gods and goddesses in Greek mythology] have a *refusal to recognize something* as their basic principle and *raison d'être*" (352). In the case of Mitchell and Tyson songs, the assimilation of the Chinese restaurant into *Bildung* narratives where whiteness is projected against Chineseness constitutes "a refusal to recognize" the ways in which the consolidation of white liberal subjectivity is predicated upon Chineseness.

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[21] This is the difference between Mitchell and Tyson's songs and texts such as Robert Kroetsch's "Elegy for Wong Toy" or W.O. Mitchell's Who Has Seen the Wind?. While all of these texts put the small town Chinese restaurant forward as a metonym for a pure, innocent Canada, Mitchell and Tyson idealize their own narratives by simultaneously recognizing and disavowing Chineseness. In contrast, Kroetsch and W.O. Mitchell focus on the Chinese subject in their writing. These latter two texts also simultaneously recognize and disavow Chineseness by fixing them as sites of an unchanging racial identity. In Kroetsch's poem, the refrain "You were your own enduring winter" suggests a stability and consistency to Wong Toy's existence. Like winter, he endured, alone, unchanging, season after season. Even in death, the poem asks Wong Toy to continue to sit upright behind the counter, isolated and alone among the unwanted heart-shaped chocolates that no one ever wanted to take home. Wong Toy and the restauarnt become interchangeable, one and the same. To say that Wong Toy is the restaurant explicitly marks the way in which the space of the restaurant is a product of the social relations which produce the restaurant as a space of terrible isolation and which collapses Wong Toy with the restaurant itself. The space of white nostalgia consecrates the space of the restaurant and Wong Toy himself as a timeless object representative of a loss which can never be recovered. And yet, clearly the restaurant must have changed. Wong Toy could not have been always the same man. As I have noted earlier with reference to Bhabha's discussion of the colonial stereoptye, it is one of the defining markers of the racial stereotype that it attempts to fix the racialized subject, producing a racial subject which denies the history of racialization.

[22] As James Strachey's introduction to "Papers on Metapsychology" make clear, Freud mentions the mechanism of projection in a number of places but his comprehensive discussion of projection was either never completed or it was amongst the "lost" papers on metapsychology. Strachey notes that "Freud discussed the mechanism of projection, but professed himself dissatisfied and promised to consider it more fully in a later work.

In the refusal to recognize the constitutive function of Chineseness for these narratives of development, the projection of an idealized white past against the small town Chinese restaurant reveals the fixing of its otherness as a feature of the past. Mitchell and Tyson throw into relief the progressive narratives of their lives, the advancement from the naiveté of girlhood to the melancholic wisdom of womanhood, through the projection of these narratives against an otherness that must remain mutely fixed and in the background.

This he seems never to have done, unless it was in one of these missing papers [on metapsychology]" (103 n.1).

Let me close by suggesting that this attempt to reduce the Chinese restaurant to a mere backdrop does not succeed. Reading the attempt to relegate the Chinese restaurant to the background – to suggest that it is little more than a convenient and coincidental backdrop (as both these songs do in their evocation of the Chinese restaurant and subsequent collapse of it with the space of 1950s sentimentality) – through the lens of postmodern cultural geography, we can see that space is not static. As we know from Henri Lefebvre, it is a mistake to view space as merely a backdrop for the drama of human events. In The Production of Space, Lefebvre argues that the relegation to space as a mere backdrop to the events of human history occludes the ideological implications of the use of space in the production of history. Noting that most of the major wars in history, including the work of empire, suppress an understanding of space as socially produced and in favour of a historicist narrative of conquest and development, Lefebvre suggests that

> [t]he space of capitalist accumulation thus gradually came to life, and began to be fitted out. This process of animation is admiringly referred to as history, and its motor sought in all kinds of factors: dynastic interests, ideologies, the ambitions of the mighty, the formation of nation states, demographic pressures, and so on. This is the road to a ceaseless analysing of, and searching for, dates and chains of events. (275)

In order to resist the abstraction of space from the productivity of the social relations which produce and are produced by space, we need to re-animate the spatial. Doreen Massey proposes that we accomplish this by understanding space as imbricated with time. "The point here however is not to argue for an upgrading of the status of space within the terms of the old dualism (a project which is arguably inherently difficult anyway, given the terms of that dualism), but to argue that what must be overcome is the very formulation of space/time in terms of this kind of dichotomy" (Massey 260). Taking up space as dynamic offers one way of reading the Chinese restaurant in the Mitchell and Tyson songs in terms of its productivity, in terms of the way it produces and shapes the narratives of personal history in these songs. Rather than a mute and static backdrop to the events in these songs, the Chinese restaurant is a productive space of social relations. Its Chineseness cannot be excised from the space of white memory. I suggest that the presence of the Chinese restaurant in these songs asserts a diasporic spatiality which cannot be suppressed and which opens up for us the ways in which diaspora space both produces social relation and is shaped by them. In the next chapter, I will analyze the workings of diaspora spatiality.

The suppression of Chineseness in the Mitchell and Tyson songs draws attention to the inconsistencies of their representation. Why is it important to name Chineseness, as both the Mitchell and Tyson songs do? As I have discussed, it is not just that Chineseness itself is integral to white liberal subjectivity, but that the presence of Chineseness in these memorial projects is a fissure which opens up for us the ways in which the colonial predications of liberal white subjectivity are mediated by a structure of nostalgia and the ways in which postmodern geography re-animates the restaurants as productive spaces which resist the attempts to relegate them to the silence of backdrops, propping up the drama of the rise of the artist as a young white woman.

While this chapter has explored two songs in particular, the structure of white nostalgia is not unique to Mitchell and Tyson. Rather, the Mitchell and Tyson songs in their singularity are symptomatic of more generalized longings in dominant culture for public space of commonality and community. This public sphere which is the object of white nostalgia's longing is both enabled by otherness at the same time that it needs to be evacuated of that otherness. I am not saying that white nostalgia is unique to white people but that it is a form of nostalgia which uses otherness as a screen. Giving the benefit of the doubt where it is due, I like to think that, despite the lack of reference to the material predications of the public sphere, Habermas is by no means an unsophisticated sentimentalist completely blind to the workings of colonialism and imperialism. Similarly, it is not simply that Joni Mitchell and Sylvia Tyson are indiscriminately nostalgic white liberals. Part of my interest in taking up their music and the public sphere lies in my sense of a more generalized investment that we have in of these projects. As I was writing about Habermas' public sphere, I was struck by how much of our contemporary society continues to be structured around this notion of a free space of intellectual exchange. And clearly, in all kinds of ways, the role of musicians such as Mitchell and Tyson, as well as their contemporaries, in raising issues of social conscience throughout their careers, whatever the level of politicization, has fortified the relationship between music and popular social protest. A responsible critique cannot just look for "bad guys." As Spivak makes clear at the end of her discussion of Kant, "although Shakespeare was great, we cannot merely continue to act out the part of Caliban. One task of deconstruction might be a persistent attempt to displace the reversal, to show the complicity between native hegemony and the axiomatics of imperialism" (37). This displacement of the reversal might not only be the task of deconstruction, but of critical projects which take up the thorniness of critically engaging with the things that matter such as the ideal spaces of community, the longing for averted potentialities. In dealing with our post-Enlightenment legacies, we must also come to terms with our complicity in order to see through the comfortable screens of nostalgic representation. However, not all nostalgias are equal. As I will discuss in my final chapter, we must also recuperate nostalgia from the forbidding strictures of sentimentality. But let me turn first to the problem of imagining diaspora space and conceiving diasporic spatiality. As the "Chinese Café/Unchained Melody" and "The Night the Chinese Restaurant Burned Down" reveal, diaspora space refuses to be relegated to the background. As I will elaborate in the following chapter, the assertion of a diasporic spatiality emerges in this refusal.

Chapter Four

Placing Race: the Chinese Restaurant in Space

Nanemon

Seven potatoes

nana imo

A place passes

issei

between us

nisei

changed,

sansei

but still the same.

yonsei

Haruko Okano, High Tea, 22

One potato, two potato, three potato, *four*, five potato, six potato, seven potato, *more*. "Nanemon, Nanaimo. Literal meaning *nana* nine *imo* potatoes" (High 30). Count off. Who is in. Who is out. Excluded at four and more. Haruko Okano's poem weaves an alternative naming of place and a meditation on transgenerational memory in her overwriting of a nursery rhyme exclusion. Across the generations, from *issei* to *yonsei*, Nanemon has passed, changing and yet still the same. Wrapping her tongue around place and keeping the comedy of nine potatoes in circulation, in the chapbook High Tea Okano's reference to Japanese-Canadian pidgin names for places in interior British Columbia – Aratobe, Alert Bay, Deba, Steveston, Naichi Inletto, Knight Inlet, Nanemon, Nanaimo – suggests a different order of engagement with Canadian geography, an alternative emplacement which dances at the edge of the map, familiarizing the foreignness of "arrival" and grasping the Japanese in the places that are already there. Nine potatoes. Okano's poetry draws attention to ways of place-making, of emplacement. Nanemon hovers between its Anglicized geographical identity, its Japanese-Canadian connotations, and its role as a space off the map, passing between *issei*, *nisei*, *sansei*, *yonsei*, where, to borrow from Paul Gilroy in a slightly different register, "the living memory of the changing same" emerges in the articulation of community between one generation and other (198).[1] Okano's poem signals for me the complicated relationship between place and identity to which this chapter is devoted.

The very idea of diaspora already contains within it a series of assumptions about space, place and cultural difference. Diasporas are dispersed from somewhere, they arrive somewhere else and yet are still connected to that somewhere of origin, imaginary or otherwise. The notions of dislocation, migration and resettlement which gird the socio-historical understandings of diasporic communities also impel theoretical and cultural discussions of diaspora to engage with issues of spatiality. In the previous chapter, I propose the existence of a diasporic spatiality which asserts itself despite attempts in dominant culture to relegate it into the background of white cultural development. This chapter thinks through the idea of diasporic spatiality by enmeshing an understanding of diaspora space with an understanding of diaspora time. In Chapter Two, I argued through a reading of restaurant menus that the Chinese restaurant is not old-fashioned, but out of time, that it asserts a disruptive slowness which undermines the linearity of European historicism. Overall, this chapter is concerned with exploring the general possibility of understanding diasporas as reterritorializing forces through the specific examination of the Chinese diaspora in Canada and the space of the Chinese restaurant. I speak of reterritorialization not in terms of conquest or domination, but in the sense of making space, of reconstructing place from displacement. Against the now familiar discussions of diasporas as homeless and unhomed, I want to look at their incipient situatedness, the strategies of their homeliness. This chapter seeks to mark out a way of thinking about diaspora space which is imbricated with the disjunctions of diaspora time. If we are going to take seriously the traumas of displacement, we have got to think hard about the processes of emplacement. Pushing at the boundaries of our understandings of space and identity, I want to work towards an understanding of diasporic reterritorialization.

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[1] Writing of black music, Gilroy notes that "[e]ven when the network used to communicate its volatile contents has been an adjunct to the sale of black popular music, there is a direct relationship between the community of listeners constructed in the course of using that musical culture and the constitution of a tradition that is redefined here as the living memory of the changing same" (198).

In the first part of this chapter, I want to question two prevalent visions of diaspora and space. First, I want to examine the idea of diasporas as deterritorialized communities whose power lies in their lack of place, their liberation from locality.

Second, I want to look at the presumptions that often accompany diasporic trajectories – of the move from emplacement to displacement which carries within it an assumption around the unity of people and place. The second and third sections of the chapter will take up these ideas in detail through the examination of two sets of collaborations. In one, Andrew Hunter and Gu Xiong collaborate on an exhibition which was presented at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in 2000. In the second collaboration, Haruko Okano and Fred Wah produce two performances/installations and chapbooks around the menu of the Diamond Grill, one for the OR Gallery in Vancouver in August 1999 and another at the Grunt Gallery, also in Vancouver, in 2000. I will focus on their chapbooks in this chapter.

Diaspora in Space

Aihwa Ong's Flexible Citizenship opens with an image of the ultimate luxury item in Hong Kong: the foreign passport. According to the logic, the more the better. Lu Ping, the Chinese mainland official presiding over the handover in 1997, fished out a number of foreign passports at a business luncheon "to indicate he was fully aware that the Hong Kong elite has a weakness for foreign passports" (Ong Flexible1). Lu Ping could be the posterboy of what appears to be a new age of Chinese transnationalism. These are people freed from the tyranny of the local, who are more comfortable in international airports than their own multiple homes, who, in Ong's vision, "as global movers and shakers… become[] a specter that triggers a crisis in American public consciousness and challenges the hegemonic link between whiteness and global capitalism" (Ong Flexible 181). Recasting Habermas' public sphere into a notion of translocal publics, Ong takes up the examination of Chinese overseas mass-media, the circulation of "ethnic-Chinese professionals and investors as global players, and the linkages between Asian capital and American political interests," to argue that "[s]uch publics represent a new cultural phenomenon, freed of local moorings, that articulates and problematizes ethnic consciousness in the world at large" (161). For Ong, the transnational agents of her study are unbound by the weight of locality and thus pose a deterritorialized challenge to western hegemony. Throughout her discussion, the liberation from place becomes one of the crucial features of understanding the power of Chinese diaspora communities.

I am skeptical of this celebratory deterritorialism.

It is a vision which emerges from an earlier book which Ong co-edited with Paul Nonini, Ungrounded Empires. In their vision of the Chinese diaspora as an "ungrounded empire," Nonini and Ong see their project as recognizing "the necessity of reconceptualizing the relationship between the study of Chinese identities and the place-bound theorizations of pre-global social science, implied in such terms as *territory, region, nationality* and *ethnicity*" (5). What they argue against then, it seems to me, is not so much the idea of territory, region, nationality and ethnicity themselves – indeed, it is unclear how it is that these terms are themselves de facto indicators of a "pre-global social science" – but notions of power that are overly invested in locality. Instead, looking particularly at the Asian entrepreneurial elite and the history of Chinese trading minorities dispersed globally, they suggest that "[t]he potential of wild and dangerously innovative powers associated with Chinese diasporic mobility has now therefore been incorporated into the open-ended logics of flexible capitalism itself" (Nonini and Ong 20). Although I am not convinced that there might be an essential diasporic Chinese "wildness, danger, and unpredictability" that challenges and undermines modern imperial regimes of truth and power (Nonini and Ong 19), I can see how focusing on the deterritorialization of Chineseness can be seen as a powerful agential vision liberated from the turgidity of a notion of Chineseness rooted to China as a geo-political entity:

> Chinese transnational practices represent forms of power that collude with the contemporary regimes of truth and power organizing the new flexible capitalisms and modern nation-states, but also act obliquely to them, and systematically set out to transgress the shifting boundaries set by both. It is precisely for this reason that we have entitled this book Ungrounded Empires, to refer to the new deterritorialized and protean structures of domination that span the Asia Pacific and within which diaspora Chinese act – empires that constantly change shape, being constituted by Chinese transnational practices in the ether of airspaces, international time-zones, migrant labour contracts, mass media images, virtual companies, and electronic transactions, and operating across all recognized borderlines. (20)

While this is a tempting vision, the inclusion of migrant labour contracts in the list of Chinese transnational practices which constitute this ungrounded empire rings hollow. Against the ether of airspace and the flash of electronic transactions, it is hard to see how migrant labour contracts might function as an indication of agential Chineseness operating across international time zones and recognized boundaries unless we are talking about Asian labour recruiters benefiting from the exploitation of migrant labourers. The inclusion of the migrant labour contract in this list of otherwise heady examples of deterritorialized power indicates the thorny position of the dispossessed Chinese diasporic subject in this vision of placeless agency. Not only does the non-entrepreneurial underclass subject not fit, but the compulsion to allude to it at all suggests the impossibility of divorcing the newness of a post-Fordist era[2] from the anachronism of colonial domination. This is what I have referred to in Chapter Two via the words of Richard Terdiman as the way in which the past perpetually colonizes the present. But more than just a temporal disruption through the "unfitness" of the migrant labourer in this vision of Chinese transnational agency, let me suggest that the figure of the migrant labourer also complicates the headiness of an ungrounded empire. The migrant labourer's very placelessness puts into contradiction the spatial logics of the claims of deterritorialization: one can only found an empire without land if one is already deeply grounded in the networks of capital.

Ong and Nonini's terminology borrows heavily from David Harvey's work in The Condition of Postmodernity. Harvey's suggestion of an era of flexible accumulation and space-time compression as characteristics of a post-Fordist global economy insists upon the increasing irrelevance of the local, of a place-based politics. Suggesting the limitations of the local in a critique of postmodernity, Harvey argues that

> [p]ostmodernism has us accepting the reifications, actually celebrating the activities of masking and cover-up, all the fetishisms of locality, place or social

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[2] Nonini and Ong emphasize the newness in their readings of a post-Fordist Asia-Pacific. Writing of "the transformations in the last two decades associated with flexible accumulation have led to the emergence of polycentric global capitalism with multiple nodes of geopolitical and economic power… These economic and political

> grouping, while denying that kind of meta-theory which can grasp the political-economic processes (money flows, international divisions of labour, financial markets and the like) that are becoming ever more universalizing in their depth, intensity, reach and power over daily life. (117)

Harvey's juxtaposition of the local against the universalizing reach of the global suggests a false division between the local and the global. As Doreen Massey observes, "whatever else they are, localities are *constructions* out of the intersections and interactions of concrete social relationships and social processes in a situation of co-presence… localities are not simply spatial areas you can easily draw a line around" (139). Massey's point gestures to the shadowy figure of the migrant labourer, the dispossessed diasporic, which haunts Ong and Nonini's claims. For there to be an ungrounded empire, people have to be unmoored from attachments to the local. In order to conceive of a cosmopolitan Chinese transnational, they have had to define this celebratory transnational figure over and against the wretched one. This suppression enacts a double silencing of the underclass diasporic. Akash Kapur notes that the "problem with the predominance of cosmopolitan diasporic writing… is in the absence of that other diasporic voice, in the silencing of the men and women who arrive in Europe [and other first world locations] not safely buckled into their seats, but clinging frozen to the undercarriage of aeroplanes and trains, or suffocated in the backs of lorries and vans" (10). The spatial logic of a triumphant state of deterritorialization can only be defined against an insistence on the stodginess of what it means to be "landed." As Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson argue, "[i]nstead of stopping with the notion of deterritorialization, the pulverization of the

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reconfigurations have called forth (though not determined) new, condensed cultural space of high modernity, we need to theorize how space is being *re*territorialized in the contemporary world" (50).

However, the problem with thinking of the locality of diasporic community lies in the presumptions around the locations of diasporic "arrival," around the trajectories of diasporic subjects. In these presumptions, there is a unity between people and place. As I have noted in Chapter Two, the idea of Chinatown itself suggests a bounded space of ethnicity. It does not challenge the idea of ethnic enclave or the city within a city. Moreover, Chinatown scholarship takes for granted the space of Chinatown as a Chinese one. Recent treatments such as Jan Lin's Reconstructing Chinatown, which attempts to situate New York's Chinatown within a series of flows, cannot help seeing Chinatown as a coherent spatial territory through which flows of people, information and commodities drift in and out. While I agree with the overall goals of Chinatown studies which suggest that we need to look at the ways in which minoritized communities make a space for themselves in what can otherwise be hostile and deeply inhospitable landscapes, I also want to stress the urgency of extending our understanding of emplacement beyond the naturalization of people and place, of, for example, Chinatown as the location of Chinese people. As Kay Anderson has so trenchantly noted, the idea of Chinatown as a discrete spatial territory with clearly marked boundaries on the maps of North American cities is the product of a racist urban planning policy of ghettoization and segregation.[3]

Anderson's analysis gestures towards the work of Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson who argue against an understanding of space and identity where both are seen as distinct and bounded. For Gupta and Ferguson, the traditional mapping of cultures and

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formations, new cultural commodities, and new forms of cultural production" (14).

peoples has dominated our understanding of spatialized difference and obscured an understanding of the workings of space as productive of social relationships:

> The clearest illustration of this kind of thinking are the classic 'ethnographic maps' that purported to display the spatial distribution of peoples, tribes, and cultures. But in all these cases, space itself becomes a kind of neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization is inscribed. It is in this way that space functions as a central organizing principle in the social sciences at the same time that it disappears from analytical purview. (34)

Analyzing the ways Chinese diaspora communities make space through a model of thinking that binds Chinese people with a specifically Chinese space risks replicating a method of ethnic and cultural mapping which carries echoes of the now defunct ethnographic "peoples and cultures" mode of thinking. Despite multiculturalist or subcultures approaches, the attempts to globalize Chinatowns continue to belie a reliance on isomorphism. As Gupta and Ferguson argue,

> [c]onventional accounts of ethnicity, even when used to describe cultural differences in settings where people live side by side, rely on an unproblematic link between identity and place. While such concepts are suggestive because they endeavour to stretch the naturalized association of culture and place, they fail to interrogate this assumption in a truly fundamental manner. (35)

The problem then with thinking of Chinatown as related to China, either as a miniaturized version of the nation which is somehow then related to a notion of "Chinese

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[3] Please see Anderson's Vancouver's Chinatown.

culture," or as an insular ethnic enclave or city within a city, lies in the unquestioned relationship between the diasporic space of Chinatown and an originary space of culture, China. In the unquestioned intertwining of peoples and cultures, "[i]t is so taken for granted that each country embodies its own distinctive culture and society that the terms 'society' and 'culture' are routinely simply appended to the names of nation-states, as when a tourist visits India to understand 'Indian culture' and 'Indian society'… or to the United States to get a whiff of 'American culture'" (Gupta and Ferguson 34). Similarly, the unquestioned relationship between a diasporic community and its perceived country of origin persists. Even though we know that North American Chinatowns often include a vibrant and complex mix of other Asian communities (Vietnamese, Filipino, Japanese and so on), and that not all Chinese migrants come from the People's Republic of China, there continues to be a simplification of the relationship between the space of Chineseness in diaspora and something like an ultimate originary space, China.

While Gupta and Ferguson outline the ways in which the naturalized mapping of people and place has dominated the work of anthropology, their analysis also reveals the naturalization of the space of culture and difference in diaspora studies. The central spatial metaphor of diaspora studies, the dispersion or scattering of peoples from an originary location, has retained its purchase even though we know that people's trajectories are more complicated than a straightforward scattering of one people into the space of another people. We have had to hang on to this spatial metaphor partly because there are few other ways to name difference. As I noted in Chapter One, we need to continue to insist on racial difference, on the knowledge that there are some communities for whom the injunction "Go home" carries a profound capacity for pain and humiliation which is not experienced by others. One of the only ways to insist on the importance of race for understanding contemporary diasporas has then been the insistence on the notion of the diasporic trajectory. Because dislocation is one of the defining characteristics of diasporas, we have had to insist on the movement from one space to another, and the tendency is to see that originary space as one of cultural distinction which then has to be accommodated, inserted and asserted in the space of "arrival." However, this trajectory takes for granted the spaces of "home" and "arrival" where the former can only become a fantasized site of origin and the latter a complicated site of negotiation. Instead of understanding the "home" of diasporic trajectories as primeval localities which expel people into new places that are becoming increasingly culturally mixed as a result, we need to understand the construction of home and arrival in diasporic trajectories. Not doing so naturalizes the idea that diasporic peoples come from a space of racial homogeneity and arrive at spaces which are becoming increasingly multicultural because of other people "like them" without ever questioning the autochthonous claims of those "who were there first." In the case of the Chinese diaspora, taking for granted the trajectory of "home" and "arrival" naturalizes the idea that China is a uniformly "Chinese" country, that Chinese diapsora communities ultimately come from China (even if there are multi-generational detours through Indonesia, Vietnam, South Africa and so on) and that white people originate in Canada.

Instead of seeing diaspora as a pre-contact and post-contact trajectory where, in North America, contact is defined by interactions between white and non-white peoples, we need to understand the trajectory as the replacing of one set of interconnections and interactions with another set. That is, for example, setting the interactions of twentieth-century Chinese migrant labourers in Canada in the context of the interactions between Europe and China in the nineteenth-century. It is also, at the same time, seeing China itself as a nation-state constituted by heterogeneous ethnic groups, many of whom have been repressed by the nation-state. Of course, deconstructing the "home" or "homeland" of diasporas has already been a significant part of diaspora studies. But these deconstructions, the acknowledgement of "imaginary homelands," do not question the trajectory of moving from a homeland, imagined or otherwise, into a space that is not "home," the trajectory from being placed to being displaced. Rather, we need to move to understanding diasporic communities as shifting from one experience of displacement to another. This is not to undermine either the desire for "home" or homesickness expressed by diasporic subjects – after all, they often know better than anyone else that there is no home to go back to and this does not make the experience of homesickness any less legitimate – or the experience of racism in the spaces of "arrival," but to emphasize the ways both "home" and "arrival" depend upon the construction of difference through the interconnection of ostensibly disparate spaces. "For if one begins with the premise that spaces have *always* been hierachically interconnected, instead of naturally disconnected, then cultural and social change becomes not a matter of cultural contact and articulation but one of rethinking difference *through* connection" (Gupta and Ferguson 35).

In the standard diasporic trajectory, while the notion of "home" becomes increasingly dematerialized in its deconstruction, the space of "arrival" is largely understood in terms of the dynamics of contact, the collision of cultures, and the negotiation between diasporic and non-diasporic communities, between those who are seen as being "from away" and those who see themselves as having "been here first."

Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the contact zone *seems* to offer up the possibility of thinking about the spaces such as the Chinese restaurant which emphasizes the cultural interactions which take place. Pratt proposes that the contact zone is the

> space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict… "contact zone" is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. (6-7)

While the contact zone appears to be a way of talking about the kinds of interactions that occur in diaspora, it mistakes the space of contact for the dynamics of interaction and presumes that the former leads to the latter. That is, it hangs on to to a notion of previously discrete cultures which are subsequently transformed, either through acculturation or transculturation, by contact with others, of cultures "whose trajectories *now* intersect" (Pratt 7, my emphasis). The "now" of intersection, of contact, presumes a "then" of non-contact, of an idyllic pre-modernity which did not have to deal with the intrusions of the present.[4]

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[4] Gupta and Ferguson write, for example of Margaret Shostak's Nisa: The Life and Words of !Kung Woman, a work that has been widely admired for its use of life history and experimentation with ethnographic writing by critics such as Mary Louise Pratt and James Clifford, arguing that "Shostak treats the Dobe !Kung as essential survivals of a prior evolutionary age: they are 'one of the last remaining traditional hunter-gatherer societies,' racially distinct, traditional and isolated" (44). Gupta and Ferguson note the way in which Shostak insists again and again on the isolation of the space that the !Kung inhabit, their extraordinary spatial and thus cultural separateness. In contrast to Shostak's work, subseqent anthropological studies show that the !Kung were not isolated, but "have been in continuous interaction with other groups for as long as we have evidence for" (Gupta and Ferguson 44-45). Rather than taking the difference of the !Kung as a given,

[5]This notion of contact where a pre-contact local is intruded on by the globalizing forces of colonialism, imperialism, and multinational capitalism not only presumes an isolated, "native," pre-contact space, but it is also deeply gendered. Massey notes that "the term local is used in derogatory reference to feminist concerns in intellectual work (it is *only* a local struggle, only a *local* concern)" compared to the persistly coded masculinization of the universal, the global (9-10). In the colonial relationship, the feminized local other must adjust and receive new cultural forms brought on by colonialism and imperialism. In understandings of diaspora that do not question the unity of people and place, these "locals" are now wrenched out of their "proper" place (somewhere else) and must adjust to the disorienting newness of contemporary first world existence. Not only does this presume that there is such a thing as a "proper" place for diasporic peoples, but it continues to feminize otherness.

Focusing on the notion of contact also risks privileging interactions between white and non-white communities. What is there to say that the interactions which matter in, for example, the Chinese diaspora are those between Chinese and white communities rather than the meeting of Chinese diasporic subjects with other Chinese diasporic subjects, or Chinese with Japanese or Filipino or Native American? I do not want to take away from the importance of the experience of racism and discrimination, but I also want

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Gupta and Ferguson argue that we need to think of that difference as constructed out of a series of interactions over time which "occurs in continuous, connected space, traversed by economic and political relations of inequality" (45). Similarly, James Clifford's notion of "travelling cultures" is an exhortation to re-think the "field" of anthropological work which calls for an unfixing of the space of anthropological inquiry. Clifford's idea of "travelling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-travel" focuses on the interconnected spaces which highlight the "distinct routes/roots of tribes, barriors, favelas, immigrant neighbourhoods," "new localizations, such as the 'border'" and a diasporic perspective which examines, for example, Haitian culture both in the Caribbean and Brooklyn (36-7).

to foreground the relationships among diasporic communities and subjects which can be overlooked in analyses which presume that the only transformative interactions take place with dominant white culture. In her theorization of diaspora space, Avtar Brah proposes that "border crossings do not occur only across the dominant/dominated dichotomy, but that, equally, there is traffic within cultural formations of the subordinated groups, and that these journeys are not *always* mediated through the dominant culture(s)" (209). For those who "arrive," not all spaces of contact are contact zones and not all contact zones are equal. For the "hosts," those who claim to have been there first, contacts with otherness are not necessarily transformative.

More than just privileging the interactions between the dominated and the dominant, focusing on contact itself also gives priority to relationships formed upon "arrival" rather than the experience of the passage itself. This emphasis belies a historicizing desire to put the process of becoming diasporic in the past. In "(B)ordering Naipaul," Vijay Mishra suggests instead the way in which the space of the past persists into the present. He writes of the "*jahaji-bhai* ('ship brotherhood' and sisterhood)" that developed during the journey of indentured migrant labourers from India (198). *Jahaji-bhai* involves

> the collapse of caste purities that grew out of the passage. The bonds created through the *jahaji-bhai* confraternity led to social configurations that were not unlike those of the village networks in India, but much more radical because this was the first space in which the Indian labourers had to face the reality of losing

> caste as a consequence of crossing the *kalapani*, the black sea. ("(B)ordering" 198)

Part of Mishra's insistence on the experience of the passage, akin to Paul Gilroy's discussion of routes,[6] lies in an assertion by Henri Lefebvre which Mishra cites twice in the article: "No space ever vanishes utterly, leaving no trace" (Lefebvre 164). For Mishra, the space of the ship, as well as the plantation barracks, continues to resonate in the contemporary diaspora. Mishra argues that "the experience of the old Indian diaspora[7]... does not mean that 'indenture history' is only about the past, that it does not 'space' itself out in the lives of contemporary Indo-Caribbeans by way of divisions along the lines of class" ("(B)ordering" 215). While there is nothing as clearly articulated as a *jahaji-bhai* in the Chinese diaspora, I want to keep in the foreground the possibilities of these relationships and the ways in which they continue to shape contemporary diasporic experience.

Attention to inter- and intra-diasporic relationships reveals the fetishization of space which pervades the notion of contact. Mishra's evocation of Lefebvre is not merely a gesture towards the persistence of the spaces of indenture, but also a recognition of the way in which spaces are not merely objects which can appear and disappear, but the product of social relationships which do not so much get buried as occluded. In The Production of Space, Lefebvre suggests that space, much like Marx's commodity, is the product of social relations which are obscured by a process of fetishization. For Lefebvre, the mistake in thinking of "space [as] a passive receptacle" where things just happen is the mistake of fetishizing space:

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[6] Writing in The Black Atlantic of the routes/roots of the Black diaspora, Gilroy argues "that ships were the living means by which the points within the Atlantic world were joined... they need to be thought of as cultural and political units rather than abstract embodiments of the triangular trade. They were something more – a means to conduct political dissent and possibly a distinct mode of cultural production" (16-17).

[7] Mishra distinguishes between what he terms the old diaspora and the new diaspora where the old diaspora is defined by the exclusivism of belonging to relatively insular indenture communities and the new diaspora, what he terms the "diaspora of the border" is marked by the hyphen, transculturalism and mobility. "The old diaspora broke off contact – few descendants of indentured labourers know their distant cousins back in India – the new incorporates 'India' into its bordred, deterritorialized experiences within Western nation states" (Mishra "Diasporic" 434). Mishra sees these two diasporas as interrelated in that they signal "the complex procedures by which diasporas renegotiate their perceived moment of trauma and how, in the artistic doman, the trauma works itself out" ("Diasporic" 434).

> Thus, instead of uncovering the social relationships (including class relationships) that are latent in spaces, instead of concentrating our attention on the production of space and the social relationships inherent to it – relationships which introduce specific contradictions into production, so echoing the contradiction between private ownership of the means of production and the social character of productive forces – we fall into the trap of treating space as a space "in itself," as space as such. We come to think of spatiality, and so to fetishize space in a way reminiscent of the old fetishism of commodities, where the trap lay in exchange, and the error was to consider "things" in isolation, as "things in themselves." (Lefebvre 90)

Lefebvre insists that we need to understand space as both "a *product* to be used, consumed" and "a *means* of production" (85). This understanding refuses the seemingly innocent interpretation of space in its objecthood and calls for an interrogation of the relationships of power and domination which both produce and are produced by space. For Lefebvre, social spaces "are not *things*, which have mutually limiting boundaries and which collide because of their shared contours as a result of inertia… Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity" (87). Rather than examining the relations of power at work in the "ambiguous continuity" of seeming separate spaces, insisting upon the separation of the space of culture where Chinese collides with dominant Canadian in the form of a contact zone fetishizes the space of boundary, the line of demarcation and contact. In an echo of Lefebvre's argument, Gupta and Ferguson assert that "[t]he presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography successfully to conceal the topography of power" (35).

In the following section, I will illustrate the problem of the contact zone as an approach to thinking about the spaces of diaspora through a reading of an installation at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in 2000. It is an exhibition that promises to use the spaces of contact, such as the Ding Ho Restaurant in Hamilton, Ontario, as a way of meditating on the intersection of Chinese and Canadian cultures. Its failure to do so underscores the need to go beyond naturalized notions of place and people.

Ding Ho/ Group of 7: Failed Contacts

In May 2000, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario presented a collaborative exhibit by Andrew Hunter and Gu Xiong, Ding Ho/Group of 7: China as Seen Through Canadian Eyes and Vice Versa. [8] Billed in the McMichael's press release as a "cross-cultural dialogue exploring individual vs. national identity, private memories vs. official histories, and cultural stereotypes arising from propaganda that typified China during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76 and Canada's Centennial celebrations heyday, culminating in Expo '67 and the Montreal Olympics," the exhibition promised not only to bring two disparate cultural experiences together, but also to bring the McMichael out of its stodgy shell as a bastion of white Canadian art. In a review of the exhibit by the Toronto weekly, Now, Deirdre Hanna pointed out that the McMichael is "an institution that's almost as famous for its recent legal battles around preserving the purity of the Group's reputation as it is for its stunning displays of this country's most famous artists [the Group of Seven]."[9] In the review, Hunter suggests that the exhibit was part of the McMichael's attempt to be contemporary: "'The McMichael asked me, as a consultant, what to do about contemporary programming, so I pitched this. They told us we could have four galleries – if we could put it together in five months." Five months later, the exhibit was opened and was accompanied by a book, also titled Ding Ho/Group of 7, produced by Hunter and Gu.[10] Given its institutional location, before it was even

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[8] The exhibit toured to one other location, the Mendel Gallery in Saskatchewan. My thanks to Susan Gingell for bringing this exhibition to my attention.

[9] In 1996, Robert McMichael, who along with his wife, Signe McMichael, had helped found the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in 1965 by donating their home in Kleinburg as well as all of the accompanying land and their substantial collection of Canadian art, filed a suit against the Province of Ontario for breach of contract. According to the McMichaels, the gallery had veered away from its original parameters as an exhibition space for the Group of Seven and their contemporaries by acquiring avante-garde Canadian works. According to Arts Business News, the saga continued through the courts and the provincial legislature until 2001 when a new board was appointed including more government representatives and a new five-member acquisition committee which includes both of the McMichaels. The trial put on public debate the relationship between donors and museum management.

[10] Hunter insists that the book which accompanies the exhibit is not a catalogue of the exhibit. "Ding Ho/ Group of 7 is not a traditional gallery exhibition with an accompanying catalogue. As in all of Gu Xiong's and my own projects, the lines between

hung Ding Ho/Group of 7 already carried the burden of an official desire to be multicultural, cross-cultural and contemporary. I argue that it is a burden that it cannot carry because the project fails to attend seriously to diaspora space, fetishizing difference by fetishizing space.

Although the McMichael appears to be an easy target for critique given its conservative institutional history, we can learn from the moments when conservatism attempts to change its image. Ding Ho/ Group of 7 was not a "typical" exhibit for the McMichael and the gallery's attempts to re-invent the face of its conservatism in terms of "contemporary programming" is one that deserves to be examined. Further, the explicit curatorial turn to the small town Chinese restaurant as a site of cross-culture suggests the ways in which the Chinese restaurant can be deployed not only in nostalgic narratives such as those of Joni Mitchell and Sylvia Tyson, but also by an institutional desire for a particular kind of progress where the meeting of seemingly disparate cultures can still be scripted by dominant culture.

In the introduction to the book and throughout the press materials for the exhibit, Hunter tells the same story of the exhibit's conception. In 1998 he accompanied Xiong to Chongquing on Xiong's first trip home since departing from China in 1989. On a bus ride from the family apartment to the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute where Xiong had once been a professor, the two artists exchange their first impressions of each other's countries:

> During one of the many stops due to construction, Gu Xiong turned to me and asked the simple question – "What was your first idea of China?" After a little pause, I replied, "The Ding Ho Restaurant on Upper James Street in Hamilton."

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art works, artifacts and common objects are blurred and the traditional authoritative voice

> "And what was your first idea of Canada?" I asked in turn. "The Group of Seven," Gu Xiong responded, "it was the only foreign art I saw during the Cultural Revolution." (Ding Ho 2)

Hunter writes, "For Gu Xiong and I, both the Ding Ho Restaurant and the Group of Seven were about individual and national identity, cultural stereotypes, private memories, official histories and propaganda" (Ding Ho 3). What interests me is the situating of the Chinese restaurant in this exhibit and the ways in which the exhibit fails to do what it promises: provide a cross-cultural dialogue. Even though the exhibit would seem like an obvious example of the restaurant as a contact zone and a clear vision of transcultural experiences – white guy talks to Chinese guy about first impressions of China and vice versa, and they mount an installation in an important Canadian art gallery, a gallery that is home to Xiong's first impression of Canada and that is geographically proximate to Hunter's first impression of China – the exhibit actually works to re-entrench difference rather than to examine the possible intersections between Xiong and Hunter, China and Canada. I suggest that it fails because its engagement with space is two-dimensional. That is, the exhibit and the accompanying book, reveal an understanding of spaces such as China, Canada, and the Ding Ho restaurant as little more than backdrops, fetishizing space rather than examining the social relationships which produce the spaces of their exhibition. Looking critically at Ding Ho/Group of 7 we come to the urgency of understanding the space of diaspora not only as a place where previously disparate groups meet, but one that takes seriously the spaces of difference as marked by unequal

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of the institution and official family history are challenged" (Ding Ho 3).

interactions over time, across space and inflected by histories of exploitation and the traumas of displacement.

The situating of the restaurant in the exhibit and the book signals the project's inability to come to terms with the inequalities that ground the project despite its overweening attempts at producing an equal and balanced cultural exchange. Even though the title of the exhibition signals the Ding Ho Restaurant as coeval with the Group of Seven's art in that they were Hunter and Xiong's first impressions of each other's countries, the exhibition situates the restaurant as mediation between China and Canada. Hunter and Xiong use the restaurant as a backdrop rather than as a site of examination in itself. In one of the four gallery spaces devoted to the exhibit at the McMichael, "Cultural kitsch and clash," the viewer enters a room painted bright glossy red. On the walls hang some of the most iconic work by the Group of Seven, including A.J. Casson's White Pine and Lawren Harris' Snow, which are surrounded by social-realist handbills from the Cultural Revolution promoting ballets and operas. The McMichael press release describes the installation as the clash of two cultures meeting in the representative space of the Ding Ho Restaurant:

> Mock Ding Ho restaurant decor will vie with majestic Group of Seven and classic and revolutionary Chinese landscape paintings and photographic images in this dense, chaotic space where the two cultures will be set on a collision course. Accompanying this installation will be archival material on the National Gallery of Canada's Canadian Landscape Painting exhibition, which toured China in 1975, and period newspaper clippings.

Of course, the restaurant cannot "vie" with the "majesty" of the Group of Seven. In Hunter and Xiong's work, it can only ever be a backdrop for the "real" art. Needless to say, the Group of Seven paintings are given the standard gallery treatment – plates identifying artist, medium, and date of production – whereas the handbills are merely another sign of the failure of collectivity to produce great art and thus there is no need to trace artist, medium, date of production. Not only does the juxtaposition of classic Group of Seven against the social-realist handbills lack subtlety, but it functions within a racist mode of representation where otherness is not only lacking, but can only ever prop up whiteness, serve as a backdrop, however distracting, for the white pines and snowy landscapes of genuine Canadian culture. In the book, the pages which correspond to this section of the exhibit drop the reference to the restaurant entirely. The social-realist images are scattered across the page around the Group of Seven paintings against a red background. The writing out of the restaurant in the book reinforces Hunter and Xiong's inability to engage with the space of difference. Throughout the book, two images are on the bottom corners of each of the pages, the face of Chairman Mao on the left, and Casson's White Pine on the right. In the end, Casson's White Pine might have been Xiong's first impression of Canada, but Hunter's first impression of China, the Ding Ho restaurant, loses relevance in the desire to fetishize difference.

Despite the title of the exhibit, which suggests an equivalence between the Ding Ho restaurant and the Group of Seven, a series of inequalities runs through the whole of the exhibit. The exhibit includes many pieces by Xiong spanning his career as an artist, paintings, woodblock prints, poetry, sketches and so on. In contrast, there are no pieces by Hunter other than family photos and tourist photographs from Xiong and Hunter's trip to Chongquing. Although this might look like a way of giving space to the minority artist, I see it more as an indication of the differential relationship, the unacknowledged inequality, which lies at the base of the collaboration. Hunter does not have to work to see China through Canadian eyes. He needs merely to travel, to take tourist photos and share images from old family albums. On the other hand, Xiong must constantly be processing his perceptions, he must work not only to present his experience of China and as a Chinese person, but also to present his vision of Canada. The section of the exhibit in which most of Xiong's reflections are featured is titled, not surprisingly, "The Chinese Immigrant Experience." Xiong's charcoal, Yellow Pear is meant to be symbolic of his experience as an immigrant. About the yellow pear tree, Xiong writes: "Chairman Mao said, 'If you want to know the taste of the pear, you have to bite into it.' We tasted the pear of the revolution through our sufferings in China. When we moved to Canada, we tasted another pear – culture shock. But we planted the seeds of the pear deeply into this new land, so that it may blossom and bear the fruits of our new life" (Ding Ho 44). Even though Xiong's pear tree is meant to stand in balance with Casson's White Pine, it does not in the book and it cannot in the end stand up to the comparison. Not only does it look like a lesser work – the impermanence of charcoal against oil on canvas – but what it reaches for, the organicist idea of new roots and the bearing of new fruit in a new land, cannot complement Casson's unquestioning rootedness. What Xiong politely terms "culture shock" also bears the residual taste of racism, discrimination and a history of labour exploitation.

Ding Ho/ Group of 7 is about permissible ethnicity. The Chinese subject fleeing the oppressions of China is allowed to come to "freedom" so long as he enacts the correct immigrant subjectivity. Describing his encounter with Canadian art, Xiong sustains the narrative of Canada as the land of the "glorious and free":

> In 1975, the art of the Group of Seven was shown in China. It was the first foreign art exhibition accepted by the communist government… At the time, Chinese art and culture were totally controlled by Marx, Lenin and Mao's revolutionary art theories… Western modern and contemporary art were considered "bourgeois" and were rejected by the government. When I heard that the Group of Seven was showing at the National Gallery of China, I was very surprised. After seeing the printed images in magazines, I thought they were landscapes without political messages. However, as an artist, I discovered individual voices under those beautiful landscapes. The white, snowy mountains and the colourful autumn scenes stood foremost in my mind. The white mountains stood out from the red Chinese political landscapes. The Group of Seven gave Chinese artists a very strong signal for individualism in art. This was my first impression of Canada. (Ding Ho 24)

Although Megan Bice names the Group "the most famous artists in Canadian history, symbolizing for many the concept of a distinctly Canadian identity," Lynda Jessup argues that the work of the Group of Seven, "affected by the managerial restructuring of Western society in a manner similar to that of their counterparts on both sides of the Atlantic during these years, actually helped to reformulate the cultural authority of the nation's Anglo-Canadian elite" (131). Musing on "[t]he typcial absence of people in [the Group's] landscapes (only the lonely, hardy artist is 'out there')," Benedict Anderson asks,

> If there were people in the frame, who exactly would they be? Could they, in Anglophone Ontario, be guaranteed to be Canadian? Might they not be merely British? If this interpretation has some value it suggests that the solitude of the Group's landscapes also serves to occlude the ambiguous historical identity, in the 1920s and 1930s, of Dominion settlers, among whom the painters themselves had to be counted. (100)

Anderson's musings point to the consolidation of Anglo-Canadian identity through the work of the Group of Seven's landscapes. Writing of the Group's focus on the Canadian "wilderness"[11] as the content of the majority of their work, Jessup observes that "what has not been stressed in discussion of the artists' landscape paintings to date is the fact that landscape does not inherently possess character; it is invested with character" (134). This is a crucial distinction which carries echoes of Gupta and Ferguson's argument against for understanding the production of space through social interactions and relationships. Further, Jessup suggests that the Group's apparent anti-elitism and inclusive vision of Canada is faulty at best: "Simply put, the colony-to-nation narrative championed by the Group and its supporters reveals their essentially British Canadianism, which in its appearance of inclusiveness – its claim to speak for the country as a whole – is characteristic of what can be more precisely defined as Ontario regionalism" (Jessup 136). Xiong's unquestioned characterization of Canada as a land of opportunity and individual achievement – a characterization that he specifically crafts through his encounter with the Group of Seven – is a familiar echo of what has become the standard immigrant dream – and there is a lot to be said for dreaming. But the celebration of individualism comes at the expense of a sense of the collective identity which Xiong occupies, that of the grateful immigrant. In its adherence to the presumption of a unity between people and place, an exhibit that aims to deconstruct stereotypes cannot help but reoccupy them.

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[11] Jessup also questions the popular notion that the Group travelled to pristine, untouched wilderness for their paintings. Citing Patricia Jasen's recent work, Jessup notes that most of the painting trips were "the product of the urban middle-class holiday that grew in popularity from the end of the nineteenth century in Ontario along with the growth of cities in the province and 'fears about effects of overwork and "overcivilization" on personal and racial health'" (133). Their journeys were "much touted by contemporary advocates and advertisers of the area" (Jessup 133).

The individualism and the narrative of progress and development which Xiong celebrates in Canadian art is also reflected in the overall structure of the exhibit. Ding Ho/Group of 7 consists of four gallery spaces, each one thematically organized. The first, "I live on a mountain," contrasts Hunter's experience of growing up on the Hamilton Mountain with Xiong's experience of being exiled to work in a rural mountain community during the Cultural Revolution. As I have already noted, the second gallery, "Cultural Kitsch and Clash," juxtaposes social-realist handbills with classic Group of Seven landscape paintings. This is followed by "The Chinese Immigrant Experience." Finally, the last gallery is titled "A Common River of Humanity" and consists of an installation by Gu Xiong, The River, which features two hundred cast plaster salmon that swim over a space of "things Chinese." Beginning with the disparate experiences as young men and closing with the "Common River of Humanity" with detours through the Cultural Revolution, Canadian art, and the struggle of the Chinese immigrant in Canada, Hunter and Xiong structure the exhibit to replicate the journey of the union of their two cultures from disparate spaces towards the flow of a common river. In this view, we will all eventually come to realize that we are all the same, equal and so on. This is, of course, the universalizing message of a racial politics that seeks to flatten difference.

The fixation on notions of progress throughout the exhibit belies what Doreen Massey has identified as the masculinist preoccupation with time at the expense of space. Reading the dichotomizing of space and time in Ernesto Laclau's New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time, Massey notes that

> Laclau's characterization of the spatial is, however, a relatively sophisticated version of a much more general conception of space and time (or spatiality and temporality). It is a conceptualization in which the two are opposed to each other, and in which time is the one which matters and of which History (capital H) is made. Time Marches On but space is a kind of stasis, where nothing really happens. (253)

In their privileging of the idea of the individual journey from archaism to modernity, their construction of Xiong's move from China to Canada, Xiong and Hunter's vision of space cannot help but be static and arrested. Even though they posit a space of interaction, this interaction is nevertheless expressed as the meeting of discrete entities. Space (China, Canada, the Ding Ho Restaurant) is where things happen, but what happens is History (Xiong's escape from China). Massey goes on to observe that this dichotomization is deeply gendered such that

> even where the transcodings between dualisms have an element of inconsistency, this rule still applies. Thus where time is dynamism, dislocation and History, and space is stasis, space is coded female and denigrated. But where space is chaos (which you would think was quite different from stasis; more indeed like

> dislocation), then time is Order… and space is *still* coded female, only in this context as threatening. (258)

The most obviously gendered treatment of space in Hunter and Xiong's project can be found, not surprisingly, in their representation of the Ding Ho restaurant. In the book, the only significant image of the Ding Ho Restaurant, a space which is, after all, one of the primary catalysts for the project, is on pages 56-57. It is a black and white photograph, shot in 1999, during the grey bleakness of a Hamilton winter. There is snow on the ground, the street in front is slick and muddy-looking. There are two people waiting for the bus at the stop in front of the restaurant. Electrical and telephone lines criss-cross the skyline above the restaurant, emphasizing the stolidity of its placement, its immobility. On the page, the photograph is flanked by two mirror images, both taken in Chongquing in 1998 during Hunter and Xiong's trip. In one photo, Hunter stands in front of a war memorial. In the other, Xiong stands in the identitical spot. In both shots, the memorial rises, a comically exaggerated phallus complete with rounded dome at the top and vertical columns up the sides, behind both their heads. While central to the exhibit, the restaurant must nevertheless be propped up by the priapic work of history, of men at memorials.

In Ding Ho/Group of 7 the restaurant must be situated as a place of the past, chronologically parallel to the archaism of China itself in the exhibit. Hunter writes of the restaurant as a site of his youth:

> The Ding Ho Restaurant was a bit part of growing up on the [Hamilton] mountain… Inside it was all red and gold with dragons and hanging lanterns, murals of Chinese landscapes and scroll paintings of figures in elaborate robes.

> The menu was pretty standard… fried rice, barbecued pork, egg rolls, won ton soup, chicken balls, and fried shrimp drowned in bright red sweet and sour sauce or electric yellow pineapple sauce. The Ding Ho Restaurant is still there, but it's not the same. Like many suburban Chinese restaurants, it's now an all-you-can-eat buffet… As a kid, I used to think that the Ding Ho Restaurant was what the real China was like. But then, I used to think the Hamilton mountain was a real mountain too. (Ding Ho 12)

The rejection of Ding Ho as real China is meant to signal Hunter's progressive sophistication, the move from childhood to adult awareness. However, its attempt to freeze the restaurant as a site of the past signals a lament that embodies the workings of white nostalgia that I discussed in the previous chapter. The space of youth is magical and rich with Chinoiserie and the enlightened subject matures into a recognition of inauthenticity, and yet it will continue to long for something that cannot exist. Recalling Susan Stewart, it is "a sadness without an object" (23). And, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, this nostalgia also carries with it a spatial dimension.

In spatializing the past through the Chinese restaurant, Hunter forces a separation between the past and the present, betweeen space and time. The restaurant remains fixed as a site of the past; it is a screen against which Hunter can project the narrative of his development. The restaurant must be designated as archaic and nonmodern because the separation of space and time enables the story of historical progress. As Massey notes with reference to the desire to see the "fundamentalism" surrounding the *fatwah* on Salman Rushdie as archaic rather than a feature of contemporary life,

> [t]hose who focus on what they see as the terrifying simultaneity of today… would long for such "ethnic identities" and "fundamentalisms" to be (re)placed in the past so that one story of progression between differences, rather than an account of the production of a number of different differences at one moment in time, could be told. That this cannot be done is the real meaning of the contrast between thinking in terms of three dimensions plus one [time] and recognizing the inextricability of the four dimensions together. (268)

Bright red sweet and sour sauce and won ton soup is no more a feature of the past than the all-you-can-eat buffet is a sign of modern living. These are stories we tell ourselves in order to place difference comfortably in a larger narrative of the progression of difference, of the move from social-realism to Group of Seven individualism and so on.

Ding Ho/Group of 7 fetishizes the space of difference so that, as Lefebvre argues, the walls which separate spaces mask the network of social relationships which produce them. Arguing that social space is fetishized in much the same way that Marx reveals the magic of the commodity fetish, Lefebvre playfully proposes that the view of discrete and separate spaces of difference conceals rather than uncovers the function of social space:

> Consider a house, and a street, for example. The house has six storeys and an air of immovability about it. One might almost see it as the epitome of immovability, with its concrete and its stark, cold and rigid outlines… Now a critical analysis would doubtless destroy the appearance of this house, stripping it, as it were, of its concrete slabs and its thin non-load-bearing walls, which are really glorified screens, and uncovering a very different picture. In the light of this imaginary analysis, our house would emerge as permeated from every direction by streams

> of energy which run in and out of it by every imaginable route: water, gas, electricity, telephone lines, radio and television signals and so on. Its image of immobility would then be replaced by an image of a complex of mobilities, a nexus of in and out conduits. (93)

Hunter and Xiong's treatment of the Ding Ho Restaurant reveals a desire to treat the restaurant as a portal to cultural difference, glorifying the screens of its non-load-bearing walls, rather than seeing the way in which the restaurant is situated within a nexus of relationships. In other words, the restaurant is not so much an entry point into Chinese culture, as Hunter suggests, but a diaspora space in that it contests the boundaries of Chinese and non-Chinese while refusing to keep the past past. It is not that you step into the Ding Ho Restaurant and you are one step closer to China and Chinese culture, but that the Ding Ho restaurant mediates the interaction between Chinese and non-Chinese by constructing a particular kind of Chineseness. Moreover, this is not a linear mediation, but one that is multi-axial. That is, it is not that the restaurant sits in the middle of a line between Chinese space on the one hand and non-Chinese space. We do not move from Mao on the left to White Pine on the right with Ding Ho in the middle. Rather, there are multiple spaces of difference which intersect at once. It is not enough just to juxtapose Chinese things next to Canadian things in a simulated restaurant interior and then call it a cross-cultural dialogue. We have to ask for more.

The way in which Ding Ho/ Group of 7 conceptualizes cross-cultural dialogue points to a larger problem of the spatialization of race in multiculturalism. In recent years, much of the popular debate[12] on multiculturalism in Canada has focussed on issues of race in space, largely through discussions of ghettoization. Writers such as Neil Bissoondath and Richard Gwyn argue that multiculturalism creates ethnic ghettos which heighten differences rather than encouraging acceptance of difference, creating multiple solitudes. Defenders of Canada's policy of multiculturalism, such as Will Kymlicka, have responded by pointing to the relative success of Canada's project and have suggested that the statistics don't support criticism. While the debate on ghettoization highlights the ways in which white Canada can celebrate its official multiculturalism, it also occludes the work of power in this spatializing of race. In the spatial marginalization of its ethnic others, the ghettoization debate also risks occluding a discussion of how this power works to enable spatial marginalization in the first place. The debate on ghettoization asks, Does race need space? How much space does race need? Should it need space? We need to move from asking if race needs space to looking at how race is produced in space and how space produces race.

Reterritorializations

Thinking of the encounter with difference as a zone of contact risks reinforcing the binaries between the incursions of the dominant and the adjustments that have to be made by the dominated. Rather, we need "to move beyond naturalized conceptions of spatialized 'cultures' and to explore instead the production of difference within common, shared, and connected space" (Gupta and Ferguson 45). In her theorization of diaspora space, Avtar Brah attempts to understand precisely the production of difference within common space. In trying to think through a concept of diaspora space which attends to the articulation of contact and its transcultural potentials without adhering to the naturalization of people and place, Brah proposes that diaspora space can be understood

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[12] In referring to a "popular debate" I am addressing here the debate that has unfolded on the pages of newspapers and public radio in Canada. Bissoondath's Selling Illusions,

> as a conceptual catogory [which] is "inhabited," not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and presented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of *diaspora space* (as opposed to diaspora) includes the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of "staying put." The diaspora space is the site where *the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native.* However, by this I do not mean to suggest an undifferentiated relativism… The similarities and differences across the different axes of differentiation – class, racism, gender, sexuality, and so on – articulate and disarticulate in the diaspora space, marking as well as being marked by the complex web of power. (209)

Brah's use of the word "native" is a deliberate reference to the discourse of autochthony which has emerged in notions of Englishness in the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While I am sympathetic to Brah's questioning the terms of indigeneity, her phrasing rearticulates the terms of spatial discretion which constitutes Pratt's contact zone. In proposing that "*the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native*," Brah suggests an equitability in the structure of the sentence that she herself is quick to disrupt. As Clifford argues, we need to "focus on the concrete mediations

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Gwyn's The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian, and Kymlicka's Finding Our Way between" the figure of the "native" and that of the "traveller" (24). Further, these mediations are uneven and need to be understood comparatively. Taking into account the axes of differentiation which Brah delineates, it is clear that the diasporic subject cannot quite be *as much* a native as the "native" is a diasporian. No matter what the official multiculturalism declares, Gu Xiong cannot be as Canadian as Andrew Hunter is Canadian. Further, despite the use of the term within a specifically British context, it does not fully acknowledge the struggles of indigenous peoples, particularly in settler colonial countries such as Canada.

However, what is useful about Brah's concept is that it attempts to think through diaspora space as a creative reterritorialization. That is, she wants to work towards an understanding of a defetishized space where difference does not come into contact and then cause radical change as a result of that contact, but where one set of changes relates to another. She does not emphasize the coming together of disparate and previously separated cultures so much as the way in which the space of difference is one of interpenetration.

Brah's concept resonates with Lefebvre's description of social space as one that is more constructively understood through an analogy with water

> where the principle of the superimposition of small movements teaches us the importance of the roles played by scale, dimension and rhythm. Great movements, vast rhythms, immense waves – these all collide and "interfere" with one another; lesser movements, on the other hand, interpenetrate. (87)

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have all been on the Canadian bestsellers lists.

Lefebvre goes on to identify the major weaknesses of this analogy, namely that it does not "explain what it is that produces these various movements, rhythms and frequencies; nor how they are sustained; nor, again, how precarious hierarchical relationships are preserved between major and minor tendencies, between the strategic and tactical levels, or between networks and locations" (87). He thus warns against taking the analogy too far. But his analogy is useful as a step in understanding the continuities of social space rather than the contours of contact zones. Adopting a more fluid conception of space also calls attention to the multiplicity of social relationships in space where "each fragment of space subjected to analysis masks not just one social relationship but a host of them that analysis can potentially disclose" (88). Brah's proposal of understanding diaspora space as a collection of diffusive flows differentiated along multiple axes of social difference breaks through the glorified screens which ostensibly separate one space from another, or one cultural formation from another.

While I had suggested some of my discomfort with Brah's concept despite its usefulness as an entry point into thinking about space and diaspora in terms of the way its primary conceptual statement is structured to suggest an equivalence which does not exist, Brah's echo of Lefebvre points to one of the places where her concept could be taken to a further level of complexity – Lefebvre does not only insist on the need to defetishize space in three dimesions, but in four. That is, he calls for thinking about space as integrally related to time.

> Let everyone look at the space around them. What do they see? Do they see *time*? They live time, after all; they are *in time*. Yet all anyone sees is movements… It is recorded solely on measuring-instruments, on clocks, that are as isolated and

> functionally specialized as time itself. Lived time loses its form and its social interest – with the exception, that is, of time spent working. Economic space subordinates time to itself; political space expels it as threatening and dangerous (to power)… Our time… is no longer visible to us, no longer intelligible. It cannot be constructed. It is consumed, exhausted, and that is all. It leaves no traces. It is concealed in space, hidden under a pile of debris to be disposed of as soon as possible. (Lefebvre 95-6)

Political space is threatened by time because it does not allow for the convenient bulldozing and paving over of the spaces of the past. It insists, for example, on the persistence of the *jahaji-bhai* in contemporary Indo-Caribbean social structures. It must be made unintelligible because it does not allow for the convenient division of the past from the present, "them" and "us." For Lefebvre, the suppression of what Doreen Massey calls "space-time" (264), the separation of time as a dimension of space, is part and parcel of the fetishization of space. As I have noted in the previous section, arguing also for the urgency of considering time and space together, Massey draws out some of the political effects of this separation, noting that configuring space as the static backdrop for dynamically unfolding events in time constitutes a masculinist and historicist view. Ignoring what physicists have long since accepted since Einstein,[13] the separation of space and time enables comfortable assumptions that some societies (which are inevitably located somewhere else and are inhabited by other people) are simply less advanced and less modern than "we" are. The suppression of time in space is the suppression of the cultural difference defined through connection and instead adopts a perception of difference defined through separation. Because it is a notion that already insists on understanding difference through the interrelation between seemingly disparate communities, I want to assert a strong sense of the temporal in Brah's conception of diaspora space.

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[13] Massey notes that in classical, Newtonian physics "both space and time exist in their own right, as do objects. Space is a passive arena, the setting for objects and their interactions… In modern physics on the other hand, the identity of things is *constituted through* interactions. In modern physics, while velocity, acceleration, and so forth are

Understanding diaspora space as both a spatial and a temporal phenomenon allows for a consideration of diaspora as not only a place where people come together, but also one where the past cannot be separated from the present. It challenges not only the homogeneity of a place, but its historicity. For example, thinking of the Chinese restaurant as a diaspora space imbricated with time does not settle for the notion of the restaurant as a specifically "Chinese" space whose presence marks the vanguard of a Canadian multiculturalism that has become increasingly tolerant and sophisticated. That would be too easy. Rather, we have to think of the restaurant as a space produced as "Chinese" out of the social relationships (including racism in its many forms as well as relationships between diasporic subjects) which are not the unfortunate feature of a past we would rather not name, much less address (or redress). Instead, these social relationships which produce the restaurant as "Chinese" lead to the unsettling possibilities of the past in the present, of the space of the ship which has not been lost or buried but persists in contemporary diasporas, emerging in between the lines of a menu or, as I will discuss in the following chapter, the hunger for tastes that you remember but cannot name.

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defined, the basic ontological categories, such as space and time, are not. Even more

Understanding diaspora space-time problematizes the narrative of diaspora as a particular feature of our time. In spite of declarations that more people are moving around than ever, that we are entering an age of hypermobility, thinking of diaspora space as imbricated with time renders that story less and less plausible. For instance, David Harvey's concept of space-time compression is one of the clearest theorizations of space and time as they relate to the encounter with otherness and yet Harvey's suggestion that the postmodern age has brought previously separate peoples closer to each other than ever belies a fetishization of the space of cultural difference, a presumption of culture as bound to place. In The Condition of Postmodernity, Harvey suggests:

> Whereas Europe once addressed African and Asian cultures across vast distances, now that "Other" has installed itself within the very heart of the western metropolis. Through a kind of reverse invasion, the periphery has infiltrated the colonial core. The protective filters of time and space have disappeared, and the encounter with the "alien" and "exotic" is now instantaneous and immediate. The western city has become a crucible in which world cultures are brought into direct contact… Time and distance no longer mediate the encounter with "other" cultures. (32-33)

While the first world might claim to be unsettled by the apparent increasing presence of otherness in the metropole, the rest of the world has long since learned that this dislocation is by no means new. Massey points out that the idea that space-time compression has made the encounter with otherness more intimate is one that is profoundly first world in its perspective:

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significantly… physical reality is conceived of as a 'four dimensional existence'" (261).

> To say that 'Time and distance *no longer* mediate the encounter with 'other cultures' is to see only the present form of that encounter, and implicitly to read the history from a First World/colonizing country perspective. For the security of boundaries of the place one called home must have dissolved long ago, and the coherence of one's local culture must long ago have been under threat in those parts of the world where the majority of its population lives. In those parts of the world, it is centuries now since time and distance provided much protective insulation from the outside. (165-166)

However, this is not just an issue of perspective, first world or otherwise. As I noted in Chapter One, I agree with Stuart Hall and recognize that it is presumptuous to think of all diasporic trajectories as oriented solely in one direction. At the same time, the solution is not to simply reverse the direction of our inquiries or insist on an undifferentiated two-way flow of peoples and cultures. Rather, what Hall and Massey point to is the urgency of understanding the presumptuousness of time-space compression in terms of its ethnographic assumptions. The language of infiltration and the belief that there can simply be a reverse anti-colonial invasion suggests that diasporic trajectories constitute the insertion of an autonomous otherness that can be injected into the western metropolis rather than a displacement of one set of interconnections for another. Thinking of diaspora space-time means thinking of the social relationships which construct difference. This means, for example, that the vibrancy of North American Chinatowns or the ready availability of "Chinese" food in small towns across Canada is not a sign of the increasing mobility of Chinese people and the compression of the time and space that had once separated China and Canada. Rather, we would have to think of the ways in which the production of Chineseness in Canada "occurs in continuous, connected space, traversed by economic and political relations of inequality" (Gupta and Ferguson 45). It is not that Chinese culture and Canadian culture have been brought closer and closer together in the age of cheap flights and the worldwide web (although this is a very pervasive story), but that we need to situate the production of Chineseness within the historical processes of colonialism and the expansion of global capitalism where the spaces of culture are not discrete but continous.

While a general understanding of space as continuous rather than discrete entities bumping up against one another usefully calls attention to the historical processes of the construction of difference, what I am interested in is what this means for diaspora space in particular. While Harvey may be presumptuous about the experience of encounters with otherness in the first world, he is onto something in that there is, of course, something specific about the shifts in social relationships which have produced what Brah calls diaspora space. Although Brah suggests that all of England might be considered a diaspora space (209), I want to suggest a more restrictive understanding of diaspora space in order to think through what happens within it. Just as contact itself does not necessarily produce a contact zone, the presence of difference does not *ipso facto* result in a diaspora space. In the spirit of Gupta and Ferguson's call for examining "the production of difference within common, shared, and connected spaces" (45), I propose that we think of diaspora space as being characterized by an alternative temporality.

Diaspora space is the site of the unfolding of different temporalities. In Chapter Two, I argued that the small town Chinese restaurant is not old-fashioned or out of place in an age of savvy transnationalism, but that it is out of time. I argued that the restaurants asserted a different, disjunctive temporality which challenge historicism's linearity. In his discussion of the Chinese takeaway in Britain, David Parker suggests that time-space compression is not only one-sided in terms of its privileging of First World tendencies, but also that it misses the different temporalities which exist within the First World locations themselves. He emphasizes the difference of diasporic temporality: "diasporic communities live in particular relationships to time. The very term diaspora implies the importance of migration trajectories, historical memory and the reactivation of the old in new contexts" (89).

The Chinese restaurant is not only, as I argued in Chapter Two, *out of time*, but also *out of place*. There is nothing natural about the place of Chineseness on the main streets of small towns across Canada. It has become naturalized over time but this naturalization is a fragile edifice which screens out the history of exploitation as a function of the present. According to the march of history, these immigrants are best left in the past, the restaurant is best relegated to the realm of nostalgia and the slow obliteration of the restaurant due to the encroachments of the fast food industry and new highway construction is best understood as the decay of small town life in an age of metropolitan domination, the age of the global city or city-states. As Lefebrve notes, "[w]hat we seem to have, then, is an apparent subject, an impersonal pseudo-subject, the abstract 'one' of modern social space, and – hidden within it, concealed by its illusory transparency – the real 'subject,' namely state power… History is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret – as a horizon fast disappearing behind us" (51). The restaurant is, as I have shown in the previous chapter, indicative of white nostalgia. Nostalgia naturalizes the restaurant as a feature of a historical epoch that can be experienced with regret as the passing of an era, the era of the small town, main street life and afternoons at the soda fountain. However, against this narrative, the Chinese restaurant is out of place in that whiteness must work overtime to make a place for it that conforms to the rosiness of history experienced as nostalgia. It is in that moment of overreaching that the edifice begins to crumble.

The situations of the restaurants in small town Canada not only compromise the presumed cultural homogeneity of small town Canada interrupting its whiteness, they also emphasize the emergence of difference *through* connection across cultural communities rather than the experience of distinct and separate cultural communities which may or may not come into contact with one another. This is not fake Chinese and it is not real Chinese but the productivity of the tension between these two poles of authenticity. The Chineseness of the small town restaurants is distinct from that of Vancouver's Chinatown or the streets of Chongquing. This Chineseness has been produced through the relationships within local spaces which are simultaneously tied to the global features of international migration.

In their chapbooks, Haruko Okano and Fred Wah disclose the production of difference through a multiliplicity of social relationships and across cultural communities. A couple years after the publication of Diamond Grill, Fred Wah approached the issues of diaspora and Chineseness in Canada specifically through the medium of the menu. In collaboration with Haruko Okano, Wah developed a series of performance/installations and chapbooks playing with the idea of hybridity, diaspora, space and history. It began, as they note, "at the Banff Centre in the fall of '98 as a collaboration… A batch of Haruko's Kombucha fungus had become contaminated with the mold" (Okano and Wah High 31). From this, a series of conversations emerged "around contamination, hybridity, the hyphen, and race" which turned into performances/installations at galleries and writing centres in Banff, the Kootenays, and Vancouver (Okano and Wah High 31). Okano and Wah's work explicitly explores the productive contaminations of race on the restaurant menu.

Reading in between the lines of the 1999 chapbook, the Diamond Grill a la Carte Muckamuck, which mimics the menu, suggests that there is another menu, not in the sense of secret dishes only for those who know, but in that of a history that can be threaded throughout the text of the menu . The menu opens up the disappeared spaces of oppressive histories. Beneath the cheery normality of the "real" Diamond Grill menu, Wah insists that there is another order of consumption. Wah's re-writing of a text that was designed to serve into one that subverts the expectation of service recalls Homi Bhabha's understanding of the work of hybridity as a destabilizing strategy. "Hybridity is the problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition" (Bhabha 114). The ambivalent power of hybridity, as Bhabha emphasizes, does not lie in the merging of two cultures, but in the challenges posed to colonial representation. Against the transparency of the menu both in its presentation of Chineseness and its function as a text of service, of Chinese servicing whiteness, Wah suggests the existence of an unnerving second menu. Wah does not so much change the "rules of recognition" but confounds the intelligibility of the menu. Bhabha suggests that

> [t]ransparency is the action of the distribution and arrangement of differential spaces, positions, knowledges in relation to each other, relative to a discriminatory, not inherent, sense of order. This effects a regulation of spaces and places that is authoritatively assigned; it puts the addresses into the proper frame or condition for some action or result. (109)

Against this regulation of proper spaces, of the clear distinction between Chinese and Canadian, of easy legibility and visibility, Wah's second menu offers no clear mode of reading, no obvious approach. The prices of the "items" interrupts even the less disjunctive lines the poetry; the section "Pastry and Just Deserves" reads: "I Am the Im- .... 15/ Before Mi-....15/ Gration...15"; "Under the-... 15/Finger Nails... 15/ Lies the Truth.... 15." For Wah, the hybrid is not the easy convergence of two separate cultures suddenly made into one, but the contest of meaning that happens in spaces where cultures intersect. The hyphen, that which is meant to bridge the gaps between difference, is a "[m]inus mark, not equal sign." (Wah 1999). That is, as Ding Ho/ Group of 7 demonstrates despite itself, Chinese and Canadian do not meet on equal ground and the merging of two cultures marked as different involves a process of re-marking difference.

Okano and Wah's explicit use of Chinook Jargon and Japanese-Canadian Pidgin in their collaborative work makes visible the inter-diasporic dialogues which hover between the lines of the menu. Their use of Chinook Jargon highlights the materiality of the relationships which criss-cross the boundaries of racialized spaces. Seizing the form of the menu, they write an alternative history of cultural hybridity. You might ask for "Bred to be Milked" or "Tatoosh Toast" as a Breakfast Special or a "Hanbaka with Gleasey Wapatoo" for lunch. You may have "Chow Mein Kampf" or "Egg Foo Young

Rented Muscle" as a Diamond Grill Special Chinese dish and finish your meal with a cup of "Waum Chocolate." Choosing to write in hybridized languages in a re-coded form of the menu, Okano and Wah assert the presence of intersecting cultural trajectories and the persistence of their residues in the everyday object of the menu.

In his history and exploration of Chinook Jargon, Terry Glavin observes that Chinook is "probably most accurately called a 'creole' which is distinct from 'pidgin' in that it has expanded upon itself and it is elaborately expressive. Certainly, it is fair to say Chinook was an emerging language. It comprised aboriginal languages, French and English. It was beginning to lay a foundation for an indigenous, syncretic culture" (37). Although there have been recent arguments amongst linguists and historians as to whether or not Chinook existed prior to European contact, what remains for us is a recorded legacy of Chinook usage over the course of more than two hundred years. Despite the staggering depopulation and cultural colonization of aboriginal peoples in Canada, there were still an estimated one hundred Chinook speakers in North America in 1962 (Glavin 37). Glavin's Gazetteer of Chinook Place Names, an index of hundreds of places whose names are derived from Chinook, attests to the legacy Chinook has left on the geography of British Columbia.

The prevalence of Chinook Jargon on the formal geography of British Columbia demonstrates the necessity of situating Diamond Grill – the restaurant, the chapbook and the book of prose-poems – not just in Nelson, British Columbia, but also within a series of networks and traversals, including the network of Chinook Jargon's dissemination and usage. Wah's use of the Chinook Jargon and Okano's deployment of Japanese-Canadian "pidgin" does not just suggest a space of linguistic diversity, but highlights the way in which the relationship betweeen diasporic communities produces an alternative understanding of space which is not distinct or bound, but situated as a node in a series of complex and overlapping networks. The space of the restaurant is not simply the repository or the site of multiple cultural interactions. Rather, it is produced through those interactions.

Not only do Okano and Wah's collaborative efforts emphasize the interactions between diasporic communities, between for example, Japanese-Canadian and Chinese-Canadian communities; they also call attention to the interactions between First Nations, English and French communities as well. Rather than positing the restaurant as a site for the meeting of the Chinese and the Canadian, they complicate the story of the cross-cultural dialogues which shape the restaurant. In Okano and Wah's vision of the restaurant, it is a space of intersection rather than one of arrival or convergence. Their vision resonates with a Japanese mode of spatial organization, *shin-gyo-sho*, that Lefebvre notes in his discussion of social space. It is a system of comprehending the spatial where "[m]eeting-places, intersections in the chequerwork pattern, crossroads… are more important… than other places… It is indeed true, for example, that before the Americans came to Japan crossroads had names but the roads themselves did not, and that… houses bear numbers based on their age, not on their positions in the street" (153-154). This emphasis on crossroads and the intersections between diasporas over time surfaces in Gilroy's discussion of black music where he argues that

> [t]here has been (at least) a two-way traffic between African cultural forms and the politcal cultures of diaspora blacks over a long period. We could shift here

> from the chronotope of the road to the chronotope of the crossroads in order to better appreciate intercultural details… (199)

For Gilroy, the chronotope of the crossroads helps him to make sense of the mutation of African-American jazz stylings in the townships of South Africa, or the incorporation of reggae music and Rastafari culture in Zimbabwe. However, the chronotope of the crossroads also draws us towards the way in which the identity of a place such as the Chinese restaurant emerges through the relationships among multiple communities. Okano and Wah's recasting of the space of the restaurant situates it as a kind of crossroads where multiple paths intersect over time.

Okano and Wah defetishize the space of the restaurant in that they bring to the surface the temporality of the spatial not in a simple retrieval of history but in the assertion of its instability in history, of the past as the past. In his discussion of historiography in Heterologies, Michel de Certeau suggests that

> [w]ithin a socially stratified reality, historiography defined as "past" (that is, an ensemble of alterities and of "resistances" to be comprehended or rejected) whatever did not belong to the power of producing a present, whether the power is political, social, or scientific. In other words, the "past" is the object from which a mode of production distinguishes itself in order to transform it. (216)

Instead of this production of the past as past, de Certeau suggests that historiography might instead restore "the ambiguity that characterizes the relationships between object and subject, past and present… articulating time as the ambivalence that affects the place from which it speaks and, thus, of reflecting on place as the work of time within the space of knowledge itself" (217). Okano and Wah's insistence on the space of the restaurant as the work of time puts into question the relegation of the resistances and alterities to the space of the past. They list the "Entrees" of past that refuses to be put in the past much less forgotten:

> Manzo Nagano...........18.87
> Lucky Jim..................18.92
> Komagata Maru..........19.14
> Karin Erickson............19.22
> Aquitania...................19.47
> Paper Son..................19.51
> Doug Collins..................2¢
> (only in season)
> Fujian........................19.99 (*High* 11)

This list merges the personal history of migration (Karin Erickson in 1922 and the unnameable paper son's entry in 1951 mark familial entries) with the larger ones of historical traumas, Komagata Maru and Fujian. Okano and Wah even give notorious anti-immigration writer Doug Collins his two cents. Transposing dates in immigration history with the prices on the restaurant menu, Okano and Wah suggest not only the value of these dates compared to the racism of Doug Collins or the group he is aligned with, Canada First, but they also write into the text of the menu the possibilities of another history and thus mark the space of the restaurant with the history of its "entrees." "Time," writes de Certeau, "is precisely the impossibility of an identity fixed by a place" (218). Situating Chineseness in relation to Japaneseness, to the histories of Asian migration, and the problematics of contemporary racism, Okano and Wah refuse an easy identification of "Chinese" with the spatial entity "China." As Brah notes, "[t]he *concept* of diaspora places the discourse of 'home' and 'dispersion' in creative tension, *inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing a discourse of origins*" (192-193). Okano and Wah critique the notion of a coherent and discrete "China" at the same time that they do not relinquish the desire to be at "home."

They suggest a deeply corporeal mapping of home and Canadian geography in High Tea. Observing the way in which the tongue can make space, Okano writes in "Aratobe":

> Grasping the name
> with our tongues
>
> We make the place
> our home (High 12)

Aratobe, Alert Bay, becomes other than what it is on the map. If Aratobe is Japanese-Canadian, what does that make Alert Bay? Okano points to the overlapping reterritorializations which criss-cross the spaces of diaspora. Okano does not simply claim space when she declares, "We make the place/ our home." She puts into question the conditions whereby the impersonality of "place" superseded by the indefinite, can become a "home" superseded by the possessive. "The question of home," Brah notes, "is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced… It is centrally about our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of 'belonging'" (192). "Aratobe" makes space through the contortions of the body, adjusting and yet also transforming the space of "arrival."

In situating the events of history in the place of food that can be consumed, Okano and Wah point to the way in which history enters the body. High Tea ends with a poem by Okano titled "Saiki" ("sacks" in Japanese-Canadian pidgin):

Gathered
chafed,
tossed together.

Our bodies cross
become other
than

what we knew. (28)

In the crossing of bodies, the alienation and estrangement of becoming "other/ than/ what we knew," the stability of an identity that is immutably tied to a notion of place and culture falls away. The first stanza of the poem recalls the space of the ship, the passages between one space and another. I think again of Lefebvre: "No space ever vanishes utterly, leaving no trace" (164). The diasporic body carries with it the traces of the disappeared spaces of diasporic displacement. As I will discuss in the following chapter, the memory of the body, of taste and hunger, can become one of the hallmarks of community in diaspora.

The assertion of a material, bodily memory resists the homogenizing flatness of a dominant history which continues to conceive of race solely in terms of the space it takes and whether or not it has a right, an entitlement to that space. The problem with Richard

Gwyn's argument that multiculturalism "encourages the other to claim seemingly endless entitlements" (275) isn't just that, as Kymlicka points out, the statistics don't support Gwyn's claim, but that the discussion assumes a transparency to spaces of ethnicity which does not exist. Diasporic reterritorialization is more than just occupying space, about claiming territory or demanding a building here, specially-marked street signs there. It has to do with the multiple social engagements and interactions which produce spaces marked as different. The Chinese restaurant is not produced as Chinese only by Chinese people, or the negotiations between Chinese people and white people, but through the connections between overlapping and converging communities of difference. Making diaspora space is not just about fitting in or finding a place within an imaginary, limited national real estate, but about the way in which diasporas assert an alternative engagement with the spatial that draws the suppressed temporal into the surface of daily life.

Chapter Five

"How taste remembers life":

Diasporic Memory and Community in Fred Wah's Diamond Grill[1]

> ….. How taste remembers life.
>
> Sipping underneath that wet, burned rice after dinner in his gaze is some long night far away on the other side of earth in other eyes and other pots burned hot in the charcoal clay stove flickered light from the lit dry grass under the same stars fields of rice and water Pacific Ocean end of murmured sadness jumped intestinal interstices, bisected, circulated, tongue's track, crossed into gut, guttered now between the pages of this book the floating gaze and taste burnt right through the spine. (Fred Wah, Diamond Grill 74)

In the murmured sadness of taste remembering life, the taste burnt right through the spine, Wah suggests the existence of a deeply corporeal experience of transpacific longing embedded in the text of the body. I want to take up Wah's embrace of the corporeal, the body, and the idea that the body can experience something which extends beyond the boundaries of the individual subject. The individual diasporic subject is diasporic because she or he is understood as sharing an experience of dislocation which exceeds individual experience. Diasporas are collectivities by definition. The problem of diaspora studies has been to think through what it is that constitutes diaspora as a collective, what it is that binds the individual subject to the larger community. The previous chapters have been, in different ways, building towards the articulation of this problem while taking for granted the idea that there is something which we call "Chinese" which brings together the various dispersed subjects who make up something called "the Chinese diaspora." This chapter makes a very simple argument: in order to conceive of a Chineseness which does not take for granted the modes of its own production – a Chineseness which brings together the dislocated at the same time that it does not presume a naturalized cultural nationalism – we must think of it as anchored in memory and not in history as it is generally practiced (a distinction which I will attend to, through the work of Pierre Nora, later in the chapter). The poetry of Fred Wah's Diamond Grill, much of which is anticipated in the earlier collection Waiting for Saskatchewan, makes precisely this argument.

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[1] A part of this chapter has been accepted for publication in Culture, Identity, Commodity: Diasporic Chinese Literatures in English edited by Kam Louie and Tseen Khoo.

This chapter begins by mapping out two lines of argument within two different debates and drawing out the ways in which they relate to each other. The first debate I address is that of the problem of the split between form and content which plagues current criticism on Wah's poetry. In this debate, there is a tendency to elide Wah's engagement with issues of race and belonging in discussions of the formal innovations of his writing. On the other hand, when critics do put issues of race at the forefront, there has been a consistent failure to deal with the formal aspects of his writing. Part of this has to do with the way in which we have very few critical models for talking about avant-garde[2] writers of colour. However, the dilemma of Wah criticism is also *symptomatic* of the debate on the problem of Chineseness which has flourished in recent critical discussions of the Chinese diaspora. In that debate, the now much rehearsed and yet still agonizing issue of cultural nationalism (and within that a kind of essentialism) is posed against that of a postmodern Chineseness which emphasizes the constructedness of Chinese identity.

Not only do I see these debates in Wah criticism as symptomatic of the debate on Chineseness, but I argue that they are both girded by the pervasiveness of historicism. After mapping out these two debates and their overlaps, this chapter will then suggest not only a reason for the investment in historicism, but also an alternative to it which is so beautifully articulated in Diamond Grill – the memory of the senses.[3] I will close then with a consideration of memory retrieved through the enigmatic processes of taste and smell as an alternative history.

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[2] I will use the term "avant-garde" throughout this chapter. In this usage, I am not referring to an understanding of the avant-garde in the sense of it as an advancing or progressing from a perceived artistic tradition. Rather, I want to situate my usage within Thomas Bürger's Theory of the Avante-Garde. Departing from the notion of the avante-garde as a shift from realism to aestheticism, Bürger suggests that avant-garde art is defined by an attack on the institution of art and a praxis which incorporates the sociality of lived experience into its critique: "The historical avant-garde movements made clear the significance art as an institution has for the effect of individual works, and thereby brought a shift in the problem. It became apparent that the social effect of a work of art cannot simply be gauged by considering the work itself but that its effect is decisively determined by the institution within which the work 'functions'" (90). And, crucially for my project, although he did put it in precisely these terms, Bürger insists on the necessity of *dehistoricization* as part of avant-garde praxis. Maintaining that we cannot trace the history of art as a subsystem within the history of bourgeois society because "one would do no more than relate artistic objectifications to the stages of development of bourgeois society, presupposing the latter to be already known. Knowledge cannot be produced in this fashion, since what is being looked for (the history of art and its social affect) is assumed to be known… In contrast to this idea, the nonsynchronism in the development of individual subsystems must be insisted on; which means that the history of bourgeois society can be written only as the synthesis of the nonsynchronisms in the development of various subsystems" (Bürger 24).

This chapter is motivated by the question of diasporic community. In Chapter One, I argued that diasporas cannot float away from the constitutive sadness of dislocation if they are to retain their potential as a space of powerful critique. I suggested that we think of diasporic subjects as those who have been displaced by oppression. The question then becomes, how do diasporic communities emerge as cohesive communities? One of the major premises upon which the idea of diaspora is founded is that of membership or belonging to a social entity which exceeds that of the individual. Diasporic subjects do not exist in isolation in that their diasporic state already presumes a connection to a larger community. In this chapter, I want to take up the question of the ties that bind, so to speak. If diasporas are constituted by the sadnesses of dislocation, can we conceive of a community bound by the dislocations of sadness? And, following from that, how do we think of these as agential connections rather than obligatory and restrictive attachments? In the articulation of the problem of the ties that bind, I am thinking of what David Scott calls "the demand of diaspora criticism": that is, a way of thinking through these connections that is neither culturally nationalist nor completely deconstructed (127)[4]. This is not the question of identity politics – although there are certainly some compelling overlaps – but the question of community formations and transmission. In that sense, the demand of diaspora criticism is not so much the problem of how the individual diasporic subject belongs to the group, but rather how the group constitutes itself as a group: how does a diasporic community understand itself as such?

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[3] I am anticipating the turn that I will make at the end of this chapter in this phrase, "the memory of the senses," which echoes the title of Nadia Seremetakis' two-part essay in The Senses Still.

[4] Regarding the politics of the black diaspora specifically, Scott takes "the demand of black diaspora criticism in the present that it neither wants the cultural nationalist dream of a full and homogenous blackness nor the postmodern hope of an arbitrary, empty and 'unscripted' one" (127).

Form and Content: the Dilemma of Wah Criticism

Wah's early concern for poetic form surfaces in the first issue of Tish, a small Canadian poetry magazine, which published poetry by each of its editors where each set of poems was prefaced by a statement on writing poetry by each poet. Part of Wah's early artist credo reads:

> Here is the poem as an energy preserving object. It must preserve the instants of the poets [sic] own dance with his environment – the melodies, rhythms, and structures found in unique contact with environment and response. I make the case for consonants as beats and the vowels carrying that mellismatic colour – our language is that real that it does have tones – essentially collisions of sound. (Davey 23)

While there are certainly echos of Olson's projective verse metaphors in the credo, Wah's attention to the sound of the poem and its interaction with the immediacy of its environment is an early indication of his concern with poetry's imminency, its potential to articulate that which is to come. As Jeffrey Derksen notes, Tish criticism tended to separate the social concerns of its poets from their formal experimentations. Despite statements such as Wah's and the Tish group's overall commitment to writing which engaged with lived experience, the criticism has tended to situate its rebellion almost exclusively within an understanding of avant-garde poetics which was autonomous from everyday life. While Wah's early poetry is less explicit about issues of race and identity,[5] these issues would become increasingly significant throughout the next four decades of his writing.

Pamela Banting's attempt to grapple with the formal elements of Wah's poetry is enormously suggestive of the problem of thinking about experimental writing which takes on issues of race and identity. In discussion of the genealogical implications of Wah's syntax, Banting argues that Wah's innovation in form precedes his innovation in content: "...while the content of his work is intriguing and its 'themes' heartfelt and important, it is his notation that not only makes his work new and exciting but in some respects precedes the development of the content" (100). I disagree with Banting's analysis in that I see the grief and the longings of the poetry as a complicated intervention against historicism which is deeply imbricated with the complexities of the form of Wah's writing. I disagree with her separation of the form of Wah's work from its content. Banting's understanding of the content of Wah's poetry facilitates her privileging of the autobiographical rather than the tension between autobiography and fiction leaves her criticism vulnerable to an exorbitant "Chinese-ing" of Wah's writing. Attempting to theorize Wah's experiments with syntax in the context of Wah's Chineseness, Banting argues that

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[5] Wah's poem "Testimony" in the 1962 issue of Tish 7 is, however, an example of a poetics that pushes on edges of Canadian whiteness. In "Testimony" Wah writes of a place where "the west is the west and the east/ suppressed/ into the Strait of Georgia"(Davey 152); it is a gesture to the Juan de Fuca island where many Chinese immigrants, including his father, were incarcerated upon their arrival in Canada.

> Wah's use of the indicative, the imperative and a pseudo-imperative mood, his omission of pronouns, his elision of standard grammatical particles, and his superadding of functions of different parts of speech to a single word or word cluster, like his construction of a synthetic middle voice, translate not only the Chinese written character as medium for poetry but some of the patterns of actual *spoken* Chinese as well. That is, Wah translates not just the paradigmatic model of the Chinese language; a phenomenological, oral/aural, "lived" Chinese gets translated as well. This translation of Chinese ideogrammic and speech structures into English deconstructs the meta-discourse [Harold] Bloom isolates as attendant upon standard English syntax and "undermaterializes" the phonetically-based English word, creating the conditions necessary for listening, in the same moment, to the Otherness of both English and Chinese. (108-9)

Banting's argument is both suggestive and yet disturbing in its desire to pin down the difficulty of Wah's syntax within what I can only take to be an imagined sense of "spoken Chinese." There isn't really any particular spoken Chinese – spoken Chinese exists more specifically within the world of dialect, Cantonese, Toisanese, Mandarin and so on. Additionally, as Wah has written in response to another moment of racial identification, "Well fuck! I don't even speak Chinese…" (Diamond 39). Banting's desire to locate the difficulty of Wah's writing within the assumed simplicity of being Chinese suggests one of the most difficult aspects of writing critically about Wah. We simply have very few models for thinking critically about avant-garde writers who engage with issues of race and identity.[6]

Of course, this problem is exacerbated by modern U.S. poetry's romance with things Chinese. This is the legacy of diffusion from Fenellosa to Pound and from Pound to a whole range of modern U.S poets. In Orientalism, Modernism, and the American Poem Robert Kern argues that "the issue here is not the direct or indirect influence of Chinese on American writing but a romantic or mythologized – and Western – conception of language that is imposed upon Chinese and then appropriated as a model – one that embodies values, authorizes procedures, and represents possibilities seemingly unavailable in Western languages" (6). As his reference to Said's Orientalism suggests, Kern proposes that the Chinese language and poetic tradition which re-invigorated modern U.S. poetry in the twentieth century became an orientialist object of fascination rather than a cross-cultural engagement. In the ABC of Influence, Chris Beach convincingly traces Pound's influence on Olson, Duncan, Levertov and Snyder. The relationship between things Chinese and modern poetry is necessarily an uneasy one. As Asian American poet John Yau notes in an interview with Edward Foster, "Pound's Chinese poems were very, very meaningful to me… I just read them over and over again. For me, they were about being Chinese, about some kind of identity" (qtd. in Wang 141). This statement leads Dorothy Wang to observe that "T.S Eliot's unironic declaration that, 'Pound is the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time' (Introduction to Ezra Pound: Selected Poems) might be extended to include 'inventor of Chinese American poetic subjectivity' for those poets coming before the 'Yellow Power' movements of the 1960s" (Wang 141). However, as Wang's analysis and the poetic oeuvres of writers such as Yau and Wah suggest, the question is clearly not as simple as whether or not poets of colour are colonized when they write from within a tradition that arguably emerges from orientalist desires. What we need to pay attention to, then, is the critical engagement of these writers with the poetic forms they use and push against.

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[6] There are , however, some important critical works emerging which address this gap. In the area of avant-garde black poetics, please see Aldon Nielsen's Black Chant which argues that the inter-connections between black poetry and experiments in free jazz produced a system of African-American postmodernism which precedes the arrival of French deconstruction in the U.S. In the area of Asian-American poetry, Garrett Hongo's introduction to The Open Boat: Poems from Asian America briefly traces the emergence of Asian American studies as a field and some of the problems it has encountered in terms of incorporating experimental Asian American writing into its canon. He argues that "[p]olitical awareness, engagement, and commitment do not oblige us to conform to rigid constructions of ethnic identity, to accept prohibitions of consciousness decreed by cultural guardians full of journalistic thunder or in fearful possession of curricular control" (xxxvi). However, Shelley Wong argues that Hongo's critique of the forming of the Asian-American poetic canon within Asian-American studies and U.S. ethnic studies programs conveniently misses the problem of "a larger debate within American poetry over who controls the formation of canons" (297). As Wong notes, "[t]he identification of ethnic poetry and ethnic studies programs with politics, aesthetic naivete, and sociological-mindedness affords Asian American writing little literary purchase within the dominant strains of Anglo-American poetry" (298). Instead of attacking ethnic and Asian American studies programs, Wong calls for an attentiveness to the limits of the English language to capture the experience of otherness. For Wong, the Asian-American writer's "poetic utterance… is characterized by its inability and need simultaneously to say and not say" (300). See also Dorothy Wang's "John Yau and the Parodying Private Eye."

However, as Jeff Derksen notes, avant-garde writing tends to be associated (and in many ways rightly so) with a predominantly white aesthetic and criticism which seeks to focus on the formal elements of Wah's writing and has tended to separate his aesthetic innovations from the racial politics in his poetry. In "Making Race Opaque" Derksen traces the way in which Wah's engagement with the politics of race and belonging have been severely elided in discussions which privilege a rigorous analysis of the form of

Wah's writing over his content. Noting Wah's early affiliation with the Tish group in Canadian poetry, Derksen argues that

> Wah's work, despite having working-class Chinese-Canadian content – that is, he writes his racialized history and life into the content of the books – has been predominantly read not as the work of a writer of colour, nor even much as an ethnic writer, but rather as a member of the Tish avant-garde. The reasons lie partly in a literary criticism that does not adequately contest the notions of official multiculturalism and in a formulation of the avant-garde as separate from lived life. A double bind which places race and ethnicity within Canadianness and a reading of the avant-garde that separates content from form embraces Wah's work. (70)

Susan Fisher's "Japanese Elements in the Poetry of Fred Wah and Roy Kiyooka" in the 1999 special issue of Canadian Literature on Asian-Canadian writing enacts exactly this double bind. Attempting to address Wah's experimentation with Japanese poetic forms such as *haibun* and *uta nikki*, Fisher's article seeks to uncover an "appropriate way to link poetics and ethnicity" (94). Perhaps it is this preoccuppation with appropriateness that leads Fisher to a conclusion which empties Wah's writing of a politics of race. Taking up Derksen, Fisher suggests that we need to read Wah not only within the larger tradition of avant-garde challenges, but also with an understanding that the source of Wah's interest in non-Western poetic forms may have come from the white avant-garde tradition in which he was trained: "[Derksen] neglects to point out how *avant-garde* poetics may have led Wah to the ethnopoetics he practises. Wah's use of Japanese-influenced elements can be traced to New American Poetics of the 1960s which in many respects was inspired by the poetry of Japan and China" (99). Arguing that there is "no special match between themes of Asian cultural displacement that interest Wah and Japanese forms," Fisher proposes that "Wah's choice of Japanese models is awkward for any theory of ethnopoetics. Whatever aesthetic a Canandian-born person of Chinese ancestry might unconsciously absorb from conversations with parents or grandparents, it is not a Japanese one" (100). Despite noting that Wah himself in "The Poetics of Ethnicity" – an essay in which he suggests that Joy Kogawa and Rohinton Mistry write within a colonized inheritance of realism – argued for the importance of challenging dominant racist culture through form and technique, Fisher concludes that "there is in fact no particular 'poetics of ethnicity'" (101).

The problem with Fisher's analysis lies in its desire for a theory of origins rather than an exploration of the way in which Wah uses the estranging possibilities of language as a means of challenging racist culture. What does it matter where Wah learned about *haibun*? Does the disjuncture between his ethnic self-identification (Chinese-Scots/Irish-Swedish) and the Japanese forms he adopts in his poetry really suggest that there is no relationship between race and aesthetics, no "poetics of ethnicity"? Would the connection be less awkward for Fisher if Wah borrowed more obviously from the tradition of Tang Dynasty poetry? Aside from an astonishing tendency to essentialize Wah's Chineseness, Fisher's conclusion suggests an arbitary separation between aesthetics and race which is precisely the problem of an avant-garde critique. Surely, the way in which Wah uses Japanese poetic forms is different than the way in which Ezra Pound or Charles Olson deploy them? It is sadly ironic that an article which is ostensibly about the intersection between race and formal innovation concludes with an utter evacuation of the politics of race in the discussion of Wah's formal challenge to the colonial inheritance of English literature.

Cynthia Sugars' "The Negative Capability of Camouflage" enacts the other half of Derksen's double bind. While I agree with Sugars' that "Wah engages in a reinscription of conventional Canadian spatiocultural iconography," her claim that Wah "effects de-diasporization" through an emphasis on hybridity mistakes the politics of diaspora for nostalgic cultural nationalism and authenticity. This overly simplistic understanding of diaspora as a new version of the identity politics question leads to a reading of Diamond Grill which sacrifices attention to form for an enquiry into ethnic identity. There is no suggestion in Sugars' essay that Diamond Grill is a poetic text. She summarizes the text as though it were a prose text like a novel: "In the main storyline of Diamond Grill, the narrator is articulating not an immigrant's experience of a new world but the experience of a native-born part-Chinese-Canadian who seeks to ground himself as a 'landed' Canadian, even as he problematizes what an 'authentic' Canadianness might mean" (Sugars 31). Despite its attention to the problem of authentic ethnicity, the essay betrays a desire for a transparent ethnographic text of identity. Although it is true that Diamond Grill plays on the boundaries of prose and poetry, it seems hasty to treat it as a story about second and third generation immigrant life in Canada. In meeting bp nichols' challenge to "overwrite [his] fear of the tyranny of prose" (Diamond Acknowledgements), Wah's exploration of the prose-poem form may appear to be less dense than some of his earlier poetry. Texts such as Pictograms of Interior BC and even some of the poems in Waiting for Saskatchewan may seem more obviously experimental and avant-garde. However, the deception of the prose-poem genre lies in the appearance of transparency in a narrative that continues to play on the edges of what it means to be "faking it" (Diamond Acknowledgements). In a move that is almost the precise opposite of the criticism by Fisher and Banting, Sugars' singular attention to the content of Wah's writing, the "storyline," elides the challenges of Wah's engagement with form.[7] It is a mode of analysis which fails to do justice to the density of Wah's writing and misses a crucial facet of his interventions.

Caught between a modernist poetic tradition which has sought in Asian poetic form some of its most vigorous sources of reinvention and another tradition of reading minority literature for an ethnography or sociological reflection of diasporic Asian identity, the critical approaches to Wah's work risk occluding the very challenges he has posed to the literary establishment. In Black Chant Aldon Nielsen traces the ways in which avant-garde black writing has been almost entirely ignored in favor of more "accessible" literary forms. Disparaging a critical practice which has largely overlooked the writing of radical poets such as those in the Dasein Poets or the Cleveland Freelancers, Nielsen argues that "[t]he real cultural 'avants' of America are not the sort of emissaries that our cultural ministries want to send out as advance guard for the New World Order, and in representing our culture to ourselves we have too quickly settled for the representations of the modal average" (265). Similarly, Derksen sees a dangerous foreclosure of radical subjectivity in the failure of literary criticism to attend to the imbrication of form and content:

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[7] I recognize that Fisher's and Banting's essays focus on Wah's earlier collections, Breathin' My Name with a Sigh and Waiting for Saskatchewan, both of which might be seen as more overtly collections of poems, whereas Sugars writes largely about Diamond Grill, a series of prose-poems which play with the possibilities of prose while retaining the syntactic surprises and rhythms of a poetic text. While Fisher and Banting might be understood as dealing with more obviously "poetic" texts, and Sugars with a text that is less obviously "poetic," it would be a mistake to follow this teleological categorizing of a text as more or less poetic depending on the level of its perceived abstractness or density.

> A sort of literary Darwinism in which people of colour or working-class writers, for example, are not in a historical context to utilize more disjunctive non-narrative poetics is in operation here. A prescribed need to enter into a validating history, to be self-actualized in a way that dominant groups will recognize, implies that writers of colour who continue along this path will evolve enough to use the complex literary devices that the dominant group has at its disposal. The weblike implication is that the writing of history will not change; it is accessible only to certain methods. Extended further, this signals that only the recognizable forms of subjectivity can enter history and there is no call for a radical redefining of a Western subjectivity. (73)

As Derksen argues, the desire for a recognizable ethnographic subject lies at the heart of criticism that seeks to separate the difficulties of Wah's formal techniques from the complexities of the content of his poetry. Derksen's reading brings me to what I see as the central problem of the dilemma of Wah criticism – an unacknowledged reliance upon the historicism of racialized subjectivity.

Because this chapter hopes to intervene against the historicism of our present debates, let me briefly outline how I understand historicism and its relationship to the debates in Wah criticism that I have just discussed. I take my understanding of historicism from Walter Benjamin via Dipesh Chakrabarty and Jean-Luc Nancy via David Scott. In Provincializing Europe Chakrabarty recognizes that historicism is a term with a long and complicated history of its own. Surveying the appearances of the term from Hegel to Ranke and then its more recent resurgence in the New Historicism that is often connected to Stephen Greenblatt, Chakrabarty suggests that

> we may say that "historicism" is a mode of thinking with the following characeristics. It tells us that in order to understand the nature of anything in this world we must see it as an historically developing entity, that is, first as an individual and unique whole – as some kind of unity at least in potentia – and second, as something that develops over time… the idea of development and the assumption that a certain amount of time elapses in the very process of development are critical to this understanding. Needless to say, this passage of time that is constitutive of both the narrative and the concept of development is, in the famous words of Walter Benjamin, the secular, empty and homogenous time of history. (22-3)

Taking up this assumption of a history as an extended storyline in the development of humanity, in "Finite History" Jean-Luc Nancy argues simply that "[h]istoricism in general is the way of thinking that *presupposes* that history has always already begun, and that therefore it always merely continues" (152). Taking up Nancy's challenge to go beyond history, David Scott nevertheless recognizes the hope of a historicist critique which looks for justice within the pages of history. There is a hope that "the objective representation of what actually happened in the past, and the expectation that such a representation of the past would lay to rest the falsehoods put about by chauvinists and allow us to arrive more rationally at a design for the present" (Scott 100). Nonetheless, for Scott, playing the "game of 'historicism,' repeating with it the modernist dream, so naturalized since Hegel, so politically correct since Marx, that history can somehow redeem us, save us from ourselves" is a mistaken one (104).

The desire to situate Wah either in ethnographic terms or purely within the advances of avant-garde formalism betrays this reliance upon historicism. On the one hand, there is the hope that we can be saved from erroneous understandings of what it means to be a mixed race person of visible Asian descent by reading Wah. This is the historicist reading where there is a desire to "get it right" by treating a text such as Diamond Grill as an objective sociological text which allows Sugars to suggest that Wah is "giving voice to an experience of diaspora" (30).

On the other hand, there is the plea for redemption in seeing Wah's progression as a writer within his formal innovations measured against the homogenous empty timeline of the English literary tradition. This plea collapses in on itself when it tries to address his Chineseness by reverting to an unfortunate essentialism which evacuates Chineseness of itself. Wah is either so Chinese that his syntax echos an imaginary spoken Chinese or he is not Chinese enough for using Japanese rather than Chinese poetic forms. Although Derksen does not situate this dilemma in terms of historicism, he is correct in identifying that the problem of Wah criticism lies within the difficulty of conceptualizing a racialized subject outside of the bounds of European subjectivity. It is within this reliance on historicism that we can see the dilemma of Wah criticism as symptomatic of the broader debate in Chinese diaspora criticism regarding, in Rey Chow's words, the theoretical problem of Chineseness.[8]

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[8] I am gesturing to the title of her introduction to boundary 2 25, "Introduction: on Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem" which I will take up in the next section.

The form and content split in Wah criticism is symptomatic of and maps onto the debate on Chineseness. Both debates are ultimately about the construction and circulation of permissible subjectivities and neither debate conceptualizes the possibility of a subjectivity that is a radical redefinition of western subjectivity. In the discussion of Wah as a writer of colour, with the exception of Derksen, he must either be the formally avant-garde writer who "progresses" from the white tradition of modern U.S. poetry (the patrilineal genealogy would go something like Pound-Olson-Wah – in fact Olson has been described as Wah's "literary father" [217] by Susan Rudy) or else he must be the confessional ethnicized subject, revealing the ambivalences of his mixed race identity. This split between understanding Wah as either a formalist innovator or an ethnic confessor forecloses the possibility of non-western subjectivity. Similarly, in the debate on Chineseness which has taken over the discussions in Chinese diaspora criticism cannot come to terms with the possibility of diasporic subjectivity which is neither purely focused on the content of Chineseness nor purely focused on the forms of Chineseness, its existence as a construct. The debate on Chineseness which has flourished over the last decade in Chinese diaspora criticism contains two basic positions – cultural-nationalist/essentialist (content) on the one hand and the post-Chinese/deconstructionist (form) on the other.

On the one hand, the Chinese diasporic subject must be a cultural nationalist who seeks to "get Chineseness right" by insisting on roots in a vision of China as a cultural nucleus. That is, the Chinese diasporic subject must occupy the space of the ethnically correct Chinese object. On the other hand, the Chinese diasporic subject must deconstruct Chineseness and overcome ethnicity, thus "progressing" towards a structural understanding of Chinese identity which emphasizes a kind of formal innovation in the development of a postmodern Chinese identity. Where the former position emphasizes the content of Chineseness, a sense of the inherent cultural integrity of that which is Chinese, the latter focuses on the formal element of Chineseness, its circulation as a construction which must be actively deconstructed.

As I will illustrate in the following section, this split between the form of Chineseness and its content remains tied to a historicist vision of what it means to be Chinese which forecloses the possibility of a Chineseness which is simply outside that of western European subjectivity. The fetishization of Chineseness has obscured the problem of community which diasporas so forcefully pose to existing structures of power. In the same way that the critical debate on Wah's writing has arbitrarily polarized form and content, the debate on Chineseness has relied upon a separation between the cultural nationalist desire for a coherent Chinese rootedness and a post-Chinese call for an understanding of Chineseness as constructed. The question of how we might conceive of community in diaspora, of what it is that connects one Chinese diasporic subject to another, has taken on the form of the problem of membership and belonging. The predicament of conceiving the constitution of Chinese diasporic community has been displaced by the debate on the problem of Chineseness. This debate illustrates clearly the dilemma of the demand of diaspora criticism within the context of the Chinese diaspora. What I want to take from a review of this debate is not only a sense of the way in which these issues have defined the diaspora debate almost entirely in terms of the problem of Chineseness, but also the way in which the debate on Chineseness indicates the deep reliance upon historicism in these discussions. At no point in the following discussions do these critics meet the challenge posed by writers like Wah, that is the challenge of a radical, non-Western subjectivity which refuses the homogenous time of European history. I will now outline the contours of the cultural nationalist position and then the response to it.

The Living Tree: Chinese Cultural Nationalism

In 1994, Tu Wei-Ming's anthology, The Living Tree: the Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today helped to consolidate the cultural-nationalist strand of the debate in Chinese diaspora studies.[9] The collection as a whole argues for a particular understanding of Chineseness grounded in a stable notion of China as a center of identification.[10] Tu's introduction, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center" suggests that a notion of "cultural China" supplants the People's Republic of China as a locus of identification. Tu traces the rise of the idea of a cultural China as a movement which originates outside of mainland China but is nontheless attempting to think through a relationship with China as a recognizable social and cultural entity.

> The term "cultural China," coined in the last decade or so and often seen in intellectual journals outside mainland China, is itself an indication of the emergence of a "common awareness" (*gongshi*) among Chinese intellectuals throughout the world. The presence of such an awareness prior to the opening up

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[9] The collection grew out of a special issue of Daedulus (Spring 1991) which had in turn emerged from the 1990 Conference on the Meaning of Being Chinese in Honolulu.

[10] While collections such as these do sustain an overall editorial position, I do not want to homogenize all of the essays in the anthology. David Yen-ho Wu's "The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities" might arguably be read as bearing more in common with the deconstructionist strand of the Chineseness debate than with the cultural nationalist one.

> of mainland China in the late 1970s is made clear in the deliberate use of *huaren* (people of Chinese origin) rather than *Zhuongguoren* (citizens of the Chinese state) to designate people of a variety of nationalities who are ethnically and culturally Chinese [footnote omitted]. *Huaren* is not geographically centered, for it indicates a common ancestry and a shared cultural background, whereas *Zhuongguoren* necessarily evokes obligations and loyalties of political affiliation and the myth of the Central Country. By emphasizing cultural roots, Chinese intellectuals in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and North America hoped to build a transnational network to explore the meaning of being Chinese in a global context. (Tu 25)

What is so compelling about this vision of a cultural China is, as Tu's essay highlights, divorcing the idea of the Chinese state from the idea of a Chinese people. The cultural China movement is posed as a critique of both the Nationalist Party in Taiwan and the Communist state in China. In this movement, Tu argues that "[f]or the first time, Chinese intellectuals worldwide developed a truly new, communal, critical self-consciousness, in which the agenda of iconoclasm and nationalism is reversed; a search for cultural roots and a commitment to a form of depoliticized humanism became a strong voice in the discourse on cultural China" (30). Tu's notion of a "depoliticized humanism" seeks to emphasize the possibility of a Chineseness not only outside of the legacy of the People's Republic of China, but also within a sense of a western liberal humanism which might somehow be apolitical. Optimistically, Tu locates in the cultural China movement a position from which those on the periphery, that is those in the diaspora, could articulate a new Chineseness.

This conception of a periphery that might feed back and define the core of Chinese cultural politics rests on an unambiguous sense of China's cultural greatness in a previous era. Echoing a curious longing for a pre-colonial or pre-contact past of cultural prowess, and yet attempting to complicate a binaristic understanding of the center and the periphery, Leo Ou-fan Lee's essay in the volume suggests that

> the culture of the Tang dynasty comes readily to mind as a shining example of ancient cosmopolitanism. But its relevance to the contemporary world increases when the boundaries of the periphery extend to areas beyond the China coast… As we cast our gaze across the Pacific Ocean toward the future, perhaps Chinese of all regions and communities might take comfort in the vision that their boundaries will no longer close them off but instead criss cross each other to form interlocking networks where there is no single center. (238)

Lee's recollection of the "shining example" of the Tang dynasty as a cultural benchmark of Chinese achievement reaches back into history at the same time that it wants to stumble forward into a future where the boundaries which have separated overseas Chinese subjects from Chinese culture can become enabling locations of re-articulation rather than isolating forms of exile. It is fitting then that the volume closes with Cho-yun Hsu's call for something like a Chinese cultural renaissance:

> there is now a wonderful opportunity for intellectuals to develop a new center, a new system that embraces both the Chinese and the Western worlds. Such a system will be one of several peripheries to the center of mainstream global culture. It will be a marginality which not only has the potential to influence the

> very nature of both old systems (the Chinese and the Western) but that of the entire world. (241)

Tu's metaphor of the living tree, with its suggestion of roots and branches, takes on a series of important resonances around a certain organicist notion of culture and its relationship to Chineseness.

It is a metaphor that continues to hold sway. In 1998 Wang Gungwu and Wang Ling-chi published a two volume collection of essays, The Chinese Diaspora. The collection grew out of a conference hosted in San Francisco by the Asian American Studies Program at University of California, Berkeley, titled the Luodi-shenggen International Conference on Chinese Overseas. The conference's theme, *luodi-shenggen* , coined by Wang Ling-chi and his colleagues, means "the planting of roots in the soils of different countries" (Wang Ling-chi x). As a conference that billed itself "the first major effort to examine the position of 'the Chinese diaspora' after the end of the Cold War" (Wang Gungwu vii), Luodi-shenggen did bring together one hundred and fifty papers in Chinese, Spanish and English across a number of disciplines. However, The Chinese Diaspora, a text that wants to become a definitive declaration of Chinese diaspora studies as a field, fails to acknowledge the cultural nationalism guiding the intellectual course of its project. Behind the organicist metaphor of the living tree and the subsequent *luodi-shenggen* lies a devotion to the idea of China as an integral and coherent site of cultural belonging which takes for granted an integral and coherent Chinese subject whose real home is not Canada or the U.S. or Australia, but an entity called cultural China. These assumptions have been vigorously taken up and I will turn now to the critique of the living tree idea.

Post-Chinese Possibilities: Deconstructing Chineseness

The response to the rise of Chinese cultural nationalism in diaspora discussions has emerged in the most sustained form within the pages of another U.S.-based journal boundary 2. Allen Chun's 1996 article resoundingly sets the stage for the critique that follows. Chun's work raises the issue of China as a historical and cultural construction, beginning largely in the early twentieth century with the Nationalist Revolution of 1911. His delineation of the way in which Chineseness, as it is currently understood, has been produced through the continual oppression of Chinese minority cultures suggests that identifying as Chinese or part of a Chinese diaspora are political acts. What we now think of as Chinese, Chun argues, is a deeply political construction created for the nationalist purposes of the republican movement in China. Countering the notion of an ancient Chinese civilization, Chun notes that China as a unified political entity only emerged in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.

> Prior to the Nationalist Revolution of 1911, there was no cognate notion in Chinese society of an ethnic group… Only in the early years of the Republic did intellectuals begin to associate *chung-hua min-tsu* (Chinese as an ethnic category) with *chung-kuo jen* (citizens of China). This association was meant to consolidate the diverse constellation of people with territorial China into a single nation. (114)[11]

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[11] This deconstruction of Chinese as a historical signifier within the politics of the 1911 Nationalist Revolution is not unique to Chun. See also David Yen-ho Wu's "The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities," in particular p. 148-156.

Chun's discussion of Chineseness contests the notion of a single politically coherent Chinese culture or society.

In 1998, Rey Chow edited a special issue of boundary 2 which was then re-published, with additional essays, as Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field in 2000. Chow's introduction builds a passionate case for problematizing Chineseness and argues for the necessity of putting Chineseness productively "under erasure – not in the sense of being written out of existence but in the sense of being unpacked – and reevaluated in the catachrestic modes of its signification, the very forms of its historical construction" (Chow "Introduction" 18). Although Chow's concerns in this volume center on the problem of Chinese literary and cultural studies as a field, that is on the possible futures for what has been known as area studies in the U.S, she grounds her concerns against "a kind of cultural essentialism – in this case, sinocentrism – that draws an imaginary boundary between China and the rest of the world" (Chow "Introduction" 5). Even though this is a volume that is dedicated to re-thinking a very particular field in a very particular institutional location – Chinese literary and cultural studies – its concerns necessarily intersect with that of the Chinese diaspora because, as Chow has termed it, the theoretical problem of Chineseness haunts the basis of these discussions. Reimagining Chinese literary studies raises the spectre of "Chinese" as a center of identification and thus insists upon reimagining Chineseness, what it is that we mean when we call something Chinese.

Ien Ang's contribution to the collection, "Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm"[12] takes up the problem of Chineseness which Chow raises in the introduction and responds directly to the renewed cultural nationalism of Tu, Wang and Wang. Taking this centering-periphery model and placing it within the context of the problem of cultural hegemony, Ang warns against following an organicist and unconsciously centrist understanding of diasporas. Specifically critiquing Tu Wei-Ming's metaphor of the living tree and the notion of a cultural China where the periphery functions as the center, Ang argues that "the discourse of cultural China risks homogenizing what is otherwise a complex range of dispersed, heterogeneous, and not necessarily commensurate diaspora narratives – a homogeneity for which the sign of 'Chineseness' provides the *a priori* and taken-for-granted guarantee" (289). Ang wants to "give the living tree a good shake," questioning Tu's wholesale incorporation of diasporic Chinese in his vision of a cultural China (290). Instead of the living tree where, "[i]n the end, it all flows back to the roots"(Ang 289), Ang wants to pose the possibility of Chineseness as an open signifier which can be strategically occupied in different ways and space according to the political and social contexts in which diasporic subjects might find themselves: "Central to the diasporic paradigm is the theoretical axiom that Chineseness is not a category with a fixed content – be it racial, cultural, or geographical – but operates as an open signifier whose meanings are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated in different sections of the Chinese diaspora" (Ang "Can One" 282). Her discussion closes with a resounding rejection of race as an organizing category of identification. For Ang, the cultural nationalism of the living tree embodies a particular form of racial essentialism which must be exorcised from progressive diaspora politics:

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[12] This essay was first published in boundary 2 25.3 (1998) and, in addition to its inclusion in Chow's Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies (2000), it is also re-printed in Ang's On Not Speaking Chinese (2001). In this chapter, I will cite this essay from the 2000 re-print as I am reading it in the context of the overall editorial project

> if we are to work on the multiple, complex and overdetermined politics of "being Chinese" in today's complicated and mixed-up world, and if we are to seize on the radical theoretical promise of the diasporic perspective, we must not only resist the convenient and comforting reduction of Chineseness as a seemingly natural and certain racial essence; we must also be prepared to interrogate the very significance of the category of Chineseness per se as a predominant marker of identification and distinction. (296-7)

Ang cautions against overly simplistic narratives of return where blood "operates as the degree zero of Chineseness to which the diasporic subject can resort to recover his imaginary connectedness with China and to substantiate, through the fiction of race, what otherwise would be a culturally empty identity" (295). In thinking through this call to resist the reductionist lure of racial belonging, Ang turns back to Chow's Writing Diaspora.

The the project of deconstructing hegemonic Chineseness has been one of the most consistent threads in Rey Chow's critical oeuvre. Chow's introductory chapter of Writing Diaspora explicitly connects the problem of race, what she has termed "the myth of consanguinity" (24), with the problem of writing diaspora. Writing about the pressure to sinicize in pre-1997 Hong Kong, Chow gestures to the relationship between the metaphor of blood and that of belonging in diaspora culture:

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which had lead Chow to solicit papers under the rubric of the theoretical problem of

> The submission to consanguinity means the surrender of agency – what is built on work and livelihood rather than blood and race – in the governance of a community… Part of the goal of "writing diaspora" is, thus, to unlearn that submission to one's ethnicity such as "Chineseness" as the ultimate signified even as one continues to support movements for democracy and human rights in China, Hong Kong, and elsewhere. (24-25)

In this formulation, Chow juxtaposes blood and race against an understanding of agency. To submit to ethnic identification risks the loss of agential self-definition. While the particular historical and political context of Chow's book places this discussion of blood and race within the context of pre-handover Hong Kong, the goal of "writing diaspora" also suggests that this discussion might be read beyond the Hong Kong Chinese community and into broader discussions of the Chinese diaspora.

My uneasiness with this understanding of blood, race and belonging in diaspora lies in its unforgiving stance against the desire to belong. In Chow's formulation, the theoretical problem of Chineseness is the problem of unthinking diasporic subjects who identify too naively with the idea of being Chinese. Within this understanding, Chineseness becomes a burden which the Chinese-identified subject must bear. Despite the long hisories of racism where Chinese subjects continue to have their Chineseness read onto them, the real problem of Chineseness becomes those who have submitted to the myth of consanguinity and surrendered their agency as racialized subjects in that submission. That is, it is the responsibility of the Chinese subject in diaspora to refuse the lure of submission to ethnicity. Clearly, fanatical ethnic identifications are both

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Chineseness.

dangerous and repressive. But there is a sense here that the vast majority of people in the world who might identify as Chinese despite being physically and metaphsyically distant from the geopolitical entity of China are themselves somehow duped by the compulsion of consanguinity.

Ultimately, this charge against falling prey to the myth of consanguinity, against becoming a dupe of cultural nationalism, is a charge against homesickness – the nostalgia for a home which does not exist except as fantasy. "What is 'home'? To be nostalgic, we remember, is to be homesick…" (Chow Ethics 144). The response to Chinese diasporic cultural natonalism is not only against its essentialism, but also against its reliance on a historical narrative which is mythical. As Chun notes,

> [s]ince the very idea of (a national) identity is new, any notions of *culture* invoked in this regard, no matter how faithfully they are grounded in the past, have to be *constructions* by nature. In the end they conform to a new kind of *boundedness* in order to create bonds of horizontal solidarity between equal, autonomous individuals constitutive of the empty, homogenous social space of the nation in ways that could not have existed in a hierarchical, cosmological past. (114)

This cosmological narrative is also one which proclaims a particular form of continuity to Chinese history and tradition at the expense of recognizing the heterogeneous reality of China's population and the existence, not to mention its repression, of ethnic minorities; it is a narrative which fantasizes about a cosmopolitan Tang dynasty and does not have to deal with Tibet, with the treatment of Hmong minorities, with the experience of Chinese

Moslems.[13] Moreover, this attachment to an ancient past of cultural greatness also works to re-affirm what Chow calls the logic of the wound in Chinese history (Chow Modern 2-4): that is, an overwhelming emphasis on the ways in which China has been oppressed by Western power in the recent past without a contingent recognition of China's own role as an imperializing and colonizing power. Rightly, Ang, in agreement with James Clifford, questions the tendency in diaspora theory to privilege an understanding of diasporic identities as a "hierarchical centering and a linear rerouting back to the imagined ancestral home" ("Can One" 290). Nostalgia engenders a homesickness which can only long for a home that does not exist. The charge against homesickness is then an injunction against submitting and clinging to a mythic past. This change functions as an appeal to a notion of "reality" without any stake in what that "reality" might be.

There is compelling critical work on nostalgia that supports Chow, Ang and Chun's sense that the problem with nostalgia lies in its hostility to history, its refusal to engage with the scene of the present. As Susan Stewart notes, nostalgia is hostile to history because it encourages a kind of narcissistic disconnectedness from the immediate world, allowing instead for a continual wallowing in a fantasized and imaginary world. For Stewart, nostalgia is constitutive of a desire for a lost authenticity which had never existed except as fantasy. In On Longing, Stewart argues that nostalgia is

> a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience… Nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence,

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[13] See for example Louise Schien's discussion of the treatment of ethnic minorities in China in "Internal Orientalism."

> always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack. (23)

In the diasporic subject's longing for an idealized home that has never existed except as narrative, there is then a denial of history. In Time and Commodity Culture John Frow suggests that "[n]ostalgia for a lost authenticity is a paralysing structure of historical reflection" (79). Reflecting back only on itself and a sense of its own lack, nostalgia's ahistoricism produces a structure wherein history can only ever be mythologized.

In the context of diaspora, the condition of homesickness seems to require the fantasy of an idealized or authentic home as its object. Homesickness is then an expression of deep nostalgia for this authentic home space. Tracing the tendency of Chinese cultural production outside of China to mimic Western cultural movements, Chow observes that

> émigrés who can no longer claim proprietorship to Chinese culture through residency in China henceforth inhabit the *melancholy* position of an ethnic group that, as its identity is being "authenticated" abroad, is simultaneously relegated to the existence of ethnographic spectacle under the Western gaze… In exile, Chinese writing… is condemned to nostalgia, often no sooner reflecting or recording the "reality" of Chinese life overseas than rendering Chineseness itself as something the essence of which belongs to a bygone era. (Modern 20-21, my emphasis)

Chow's observation situates diasporic homesickness within the workings of nostalgia as an ahistorical desire which seeks to produce authenticity. More than that, this is a position which Chow identifies as a specifically melancholy one, linking the condition of diasporic nostalgia with that of diasporic melancholia.

Melancholy does not have a good reputation. As Walter Benjamin traces so thoroughly in The Origins of German Tragic Drama, the "codification" of melancholy as a syndrome "dates from the high middle ages, and the form given to the theory of the temperaments by the leader of the medical school of Salerno, Constantinus Africanus, remained in force until the renaissance. According to this theory the melancholic is 'envious, mournful, greedy, avaricious, disloyal, timorous, and sallow,' and the *humor melancholicus* is the 'least noble complexion'" (Origins 145). Reading the emblem of the stone in Albrecht Dürer's engraving, Melencolia, Benjamin notes that the stone retains a "genuinely theological conception of the melancholic, which is to be found in one of the seven deadly sins. This is *acedia*, the dullness of heart, or sloth" (Origins 155). Not only was it associated with one of the deadly sins, melancholia also became pathologized as being akin to rabies where both states were described with great similarity by Aegidius Albertinus (Origins 152).[14] As Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" illustrates, the injunction against melancholy did not end with the middle ages, but rather its pathologization carried over into our contemporary period.

Although the narcissism and selfishness of melancholy remains, the question of time and progress also underlie Freud's conception. For Freud, "the disposition to fall ill of melancholia" relies on a narcissistic identification with the object of loss where "[t]he narcissistic identification with the object then becomes a substitute for erotic cathexis, the result of which is that in spite of the conflict with the loved person the love-relation need not be given up" ("Mourning" 250, 249). However, what differentiates mourning from melancholia for Freud is a reliance on the passage of time, or the idea of progress. "We rely on [mourning] being overcome after a certain lapse of time" ("Mourning" 244). In contrast, melancholia cannot be cured over a lapse of time, it does not give up the object of its loss but rather "regresses" in a narcissistic identification. Moreover, melancholia does not want to be cured. "The complex of melancholia behaves like an *open wound*, drawing to itself cathectic energies… from all directions, and empyting the ego until it is totally impoverished" (Freud "Mourning" 253 my emphasis). The open wound of the melancholic recalls my earlier discussion of Chow's idea of the logic of the wound in Chinese history (Modern 2-4). The logic of Chinese history then, for Chow, is marked by a melancholia which is ethnocentrically self-absorbed. In Chow's understanding, diasporic nostalgia and melancholia are conjoined by a regressive inability to move forward in history.

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[14] Benjamin notes that "[o]ne of the properties assembled around Dürer's figure of Melancholy is the dog. The similarity between the condition of the melancholic, as described by Aegidius Albertinus, and the state of rabies, is not accidental. According to ancient tradition 'the spleen is dominant in the organism of the dog.' This he has in common with the melancholic. If the spleen, an organ believed to be particularly delicate, should deteriorate, then the dog is said to... become rabid. In this respect it symbolizes the darker aspect of the melancholy complexion" (Origins 152).

Diasporic nostalgia and melancholia have emerged as sentiments which are naïve at best and dangerous, leading to a kind of ethnocentrism, at worst. And yet, diasporic communities continue to be marked by a longing, a homesickness without a home. In a keynote address given at a conference on Chinese transnationalism hosted by the University of Alberta in 2001, Rey Chow addressed the issue of nostalgia, marking its circulation in the practices of the everyday as one of the major impasses approaching studies of Chinese diaspora criticism and transnational studies.[15] Reading a film such as Wong Kar Wai's In the Mood for Love, Chow suggests that an overwhelming sentimentality has come to mark the cultural production and consumption of "China" in diaspora. This recent paper picks up on issues which she explicitly explores earlier in an essay titled "A Souvenir of Love" in her Ethics After Idealism. In this essay she suggests that nostalgia can "constitute a cultural politics of *self*-nativizing" (134). More specifically, nostalgia can pose a challenge to European temporality: "… if its romance with the past seems to offer a way of imagining identity that is alternative to the one imposed by the rationalistic, consumerist, high-tech world, nostalgia is nonetheless most acutely felt not as an attempt to return to the past as such, but as an effect of temporal dislocation – of something having been displaced in time" (147). However, she closes with a warning that nostalgia's potential as an agential force might be compromised by its necessary hostility to history: "If nostalgia might be considered an alternative way of conjuring up a 'community' amid the ruthless fragmentations of postcoloniality, the community being conjured up is a *mythic* one" (148 my emphasis). Even though Chow sees the potential of nostalgia for radically challenging European teleologies of time and progress, she closes by pulling away from that potential. The community that nostalgia offers, according to Chow, is ultimately a mythic one. It is a mistake to assume that the only alternative offered by nostalgia is that of a mythic community. Because the critique is invested in historicism, Chow's analysis can only come to the conclusion that, despite nostalgia's potential to challenge European temporality, the only alternative to European rationality and teleologically-defined progress must be a mythical one.

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[15] The paper was given at the International Conference on Chinese Transnationalism and

This investment in historicism is precisely the reason why the existing critique of cultural nationalism is so unsettling. Chow's historicism is symptomatic of the larger critique that has been marshalled against the living tree concept in Chinese diaspora debates. In his afterward to Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies, Paul Bové acknowledges and celebrates the deeply historicist inflections of the collection's essays:

> Leung [Ping-Kwan], [Sung-sheng] Chang, and [Christopher] Lupke, for example, all in their different ways, historicize Chineseness by constructing alternative genealogies of literatures called Chinese… As many essays in this collection show… "Chinese" is not a natural or given essence; rather it is a concept and a social reality formed by various practices of life and knowledge… Understanding such things allows scholars and critics to do important historical work showing how such apparent "essences" as Chineseness are deeply historical and the result of… historical events and processes. (307-8)[16]

This is a project with which I am deeply sympathetic. And yet, this mobilizing of a historicized Chineseness against the cultural nationalist position feels peculiarly empty to me.

It feels peculiarly empty not because it un-moors Chineseness from the grounding of stable center of identification – a necessary and urgent task – but because it displaces the pressing issue of the oppression of historicism. Even though the debate on Chineseness and Chinese identity would suggest otherwise, this debate is not about

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Migration at the University of Alberta in October 2001.

[16] The essays that Bové refers to are: "Two Discourses on Colonialism: Huang Guili and Eileen Chang on Hong Kong of the Forties" by Leungy Ping-kwan; "Beyond Cultural and National Identities: Current Re-evaluation of the Kominka Literature from Taiwan's

essentialism or anti-essentialism. In fact, the anxieties over identity politics have displaced the question which Tu's cultural nationalism, despite its homogenizing essentialism, posed in the first place: What is it that connects Chinese subjects in diaspora? What is it that produces that obscure yet irrepressible sense of and desire for belonging to a group larger than oneself? This is, of course, why the conception of cultural China is so compelling – it divorces the idea of China from the entity that is the People's Republic of China. You can be Chinese and have very little to do with the ugliness of that history. The thing that is China with which Chinese diaspora subjects might identify has nothing to do with China as a state and everything to do with a fuzzier sense of Chineseness. This is where the boundary 2 response gets it wrong. The displacement of the problem of conceiving of diasporas into a problem of race and essentialism does a huge disservice to the enabling alternative histories embedded within the cultural production of Chinese diasporic subjects. This critique mistakes the issue of *origins* with the problem of *genesis*.

We know from Walter Benjamin that origin is not so much the problem of genesis but about the dialectical process of emergence. In The Origins of German Tragic Drama, Benjamin writes that

> Origin [*Ursprung*], although an entirely historical category, has, nevertheless, nothing to do with genesis [*Entstehung*]. The term origin is not intended to describe the process by which the existent came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance. Origin is an eddy in the stream of becoming, and in its current it swallows the material

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Japanese Period" by Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang; and "Wang Wenxing and the 'Loss' of

> involved in the process of genesis. That which is original is never revealed in the naked and manifest existence of the factual; its rhythm is only apparent to dual insight. On the one hand it needs to be recognized as a process of restoration and re-establishment, but, on the other hand, and precisely because of this, as something imperfect and incomplete. (45)

This concept of emergence and the eddy in the stream of becoming is one that I will return to again in the remainder of this chapter because it articulates perfectly the problem of diasporic community and a way of thinking about this community outside of the oppressions of historicism's insistent march forward. Benjamin touches on the problem of Chineseness in diaspora – the building and establishing of something at the same time that we recognize its necessary incompleteness. The compulsion to recognize the oppressions of the past – for example, the history of Chinese indentured labourers – becomes something which is conveniently rooted in the past without a sense for the ways in which those pasts re-emerge in the present of migrant labour. This is what I have already discussed in Chapter Two as a complicity with a teleology of progress. However, if we let go of this teleology, of this historicist narrative of origins, what then are we left with? How do we conceive of communities if they are not held together by cultural nationalist narratives of progress?

"proprioceptive synapse: memory": the Coming Community in Wah's Poetry

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China" by Christopher Lupke.

History, as it is generally understood, tells us the story of a community, of its emergence, its struggles, its consolidation or devolution. Vera Schwarcz highlights the intimate relationship between history and community in "No Solace from Lethe," an essay which struggles with the problem of Chinese history after the Cultural Revolution but which is also about the construction of a community in dispersion and its reliance on historical narratives:

> To be Chinese, not unlike being Jewish, means to be inscribed in and by historical time. Though not immune to the wish to forget the past, Chinese culture demands the transmission of memory no less forcefully than the Jewish commandment *zachor* – "you shall remember." From Confucius onward, the moral imperative of seeking the past (*qiugu*) has been the heart of China's spiritual continuity over time. Far from assuming that the past is fixed and readily knowable, both Chinese and Jewish traditions demand that it be sought after, reinterpreted, passed on, and thus preserved. (Schwarcz 69)

Describing history as the tie that binds, Schwarcz argues that "[i]n traditional China, history took the place of religion" (76). Setting aside a critique of her cultural nationalist approach where Chinese tradition seems to constitute a singular movement, what I want to take from Schwarcz's discussion is this sense of the overwhelming dependency of the formation of a community upon history. In the chapter "Dehistoricizing History" of Refashioning Futures, David Scott takes "issue with a prevalent way of conceiving this relation between community and history, one that makes the shape of the former dependent upon the story that the latter tells about the past" (93). If history is the tie that binds, what might a history unbound look like and how would that change our understanding of Chineseness and the community that I have been referring to throughout this dissertation as the Chinese diaspora?

In Chapter Two, I argued for an understanding of alternative temporalities which mark diasporic communities. Let me now follow up this understanding and suggest that these alternative temporalities contain within them the seed of an alternative history of diasporic communities. I want to take up David Scott's provocative argument for a dehistoricized history of community. Scott engages with Jean-Luc Nancy's provocation in "Finite History" to think of history as belonging not "primarily to time, nor to succession, nor to causality, but to community, or the being-in-common" (Nancy 149). Nancy's provocation, in Scott's usage, is a provocation to dehistoricize history (93). Scott's proposal unhinges the idea of community from the constitutive power of a teleologically progressive past. As I noted earlier in this chapter, Nancy argues that "[h]istoricism in general is the way of thinking that *presupposes* that history has always already begun, and that therefore it always continues. Historicism presupposes history, instead of taking it as what shall be thought" (152). Scott situates his intervention within Nancy's provocation: "This in fact will be the central thrust of my argument, that history ought to be taken as *what shall be thought*" (95).

Scott locates the problem of historicism in a discussion of R.A.L.H Gunawardana's "The People of the Lion," a historicist history which has been crucial to the construction of "Sinhala" identity in Sri Lanka. "The People of the Lion" makes an intervention in Sri Lankan race politics and an attempt to disarm nationalist discourse. Through painstaking historical research, Gunawardana argues that Sinhala identity is ideological in its construction, emerging from the name for a royal kin group to a reconstituted racial identity. Another historian, K.N.O Dharmadasa then takes on "The People of the Lion" and argues that Gunawardana got his history wrong. The debate, as Scott notes, then devolves into an academic one about data collection, sources of evidence, reading strategies and so on (102). The radical critical potential of Gunawardana's intervention becomes lost in a fight over proper scholarship. Scott notes that the cost of Gunawardana's reliance on historicism is that it leaves his critique vulnerable to the questions of historical accuracy and interpretation rather than pushing beyond that critique to set the terms for an entirely different set of questions. For Scott, "the political task of theoretical intervention is to refuse to be governed by the *questions* of one's adversaries, that the task in fact is to will, perhaps even to risk *changing the problematic* in which those questions have appeared to us natural, legitimate, or even imperative" (105).

Scott's discussion of Gunawardana reminds me of Allen Chun's argument about the historical constructedness of Chinese identity. Even though Chun makes a series of important points, his intervention is nevertheless vulnerable to a historicist critique where the cultural nationalism which he wants to argue against can mobilize his own arguments against him. For Chun, the notion of a Chinese tradition or a culture rooted in an anciet world is a fiction because "China" as a unified national entity did not emerge until 1911. However, this deconstruction rests on an argument about dates and the relativity of particular histories. For example, one could argue that "China" as a unified national entity actually emerged during the unification of China under the Sui dynasty from 589 to 618 when government was centralized, the Great Wall built, and so on. Chun's critique relies on an understanding of Chineseness premised on a singular, autonomous subject of history.

Similarly, Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies is governed by the question of defining Chineseness. What is Chinese? This is a question which carries within it strong echoes of imperial desires. For example, the question of what is Chinese, of who qualifies as Chinese, preoccupied nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Canadian governing regimes which sought to define Chinese in order to apply the head tax.[17] Changing Chineseness as a problematic would bring us to something more than an un-mooring from hegemonic ideas of China. It brings us to the formation of community independent of a historical foundation which presumes that "[t]he shape of the past ought to guarantee the shape of the present" (Scott 93). It brings us to the point of imagining a history of Chineseness unbounded by the teleology of progress.

Releasing Chineseness from a narrative of genesis and moving towards one which embraces the ebb and flow of emergence, let me take up the problem where Scott and Nancy have left it. That is, what does a community whose history must be thought look like? Throughout "Finite History," Nancy emphasizes history as a process of emergence: "We have to decide to make – to write – history, which is to expose ourselves to the nonpresence of our present, and to its *coming* (as a 'future' which does not succeed the present, but which is the coming of *our* present)" (171).[18] Let me suggest that we might look for this history precisely within the alternative temporality of diasporic emplacement, the circularities and repetitions of diasporic articulations. We can think of the history which has not yet already begun as one which is in the process of being experienced and imagined into being. And within that process, I locate a dehistoricized Chinese diaspora history, the history which must be thought, within the recuperation of nostalgia and melancholy as routes towards a suppressed history.

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[17] For example, Constance Backhouse's Colour-Coded outlines the anxiety of Canadian governing regimes in their attempt to name and recognize racial others in order to subject them to racist legislation. Also, in my "Re-reading Head Tax Racism" I discuss the anxieties of the Canadian government around the definition of "Chinese" as a category of identification.

[18] Nancy's use of the possessive "our" signals his rethinking of the idea of the time of history. Nancy arrives at a concept of "our" time and "our" present through a re-reading

This suppressed history can be found in the processes of memory. In "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," Pierre Nora observes the "eradication of memory by history" (8). Marking a difference between history and memory, Pierre Nora notes that seemingly abstract and objective remembering in the form of history has superceded a more concrete and subjective form of remembering which he has termed "true memory." Recalling the ties that bind, as Vera Schwarcz describes them, Nora differentiates between the history which binds a community and the memory which a community shares in its collectivity:

> Memory is blind to all but the group it binds – which is to say, as Maurice Hálbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that

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of Benjamin's statement, "'History is object of a construction whose place is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the "now" [*Jetztzeit*]'" (qtd. in Nancy 170). Thinking through Benjamin's idea of "now," Nancy proposes that "now" does not refer to or represent the present in Benjamin's statement. Rather, Nancy argues, "'Now' presents the present, or makes it emerge. The present, as we know it, thorughout our entire tradition, is not presentable. The present of the 'now,' which is the present of the happening, is never present. But 'now'… presents this lack of presence, which is also the coming of 'we' and of history. A time full of 'now' is a time full of openness and heterogeneity. 'Now' says 'our time;' and 'our time' says: 'We, filling the space of time with existence.' This is not an accomplishment; this is happening. Happening accomplishes – happening. History accomplishes – history" (Nancy 170). In other words, Nancy sees as the resolution to the homongenous empty time of history a communal time

> memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative. (9)

The collectivity of memory lies in a materiality which history can claim only in the abstract, in representation. Nora's differentiation between history and memory marks a crucial possibility because it contests the notion that the only way to remember the past is to historicize it. He proposes the possibility of an alternative remembering which resides outside of history and yet still within the realm of shared communal knowledge. Within the concrete, Nora identifies a particular kind of memory which has escaped the eradicating abstractions of historicism. "[T]rue memory," Nora argues, is a form of remembering, "which has taken refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories" (13). That is, the memory of the body, and not just individual memory within the individual body, but cultural memory within collective bodies.

I suggest that this conception of true memory, experienced by the individual subject and yet irrevocably tied to the experiences of a collectivity, functions as the dehistoricized history which David Scott calls for at the end of his essay. Scott sets up the problem and recognizes the urgency of seeking a "configuration of that discourse of community… (and no doubt it will have to be one in which the political forms of being-

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which is heterogeneous in its commitment to the performative utterance of "now" as in-common – those of obligation, of friendship, of citizenship – are reformulated)" (105). Scott calls for nothing less than a radical reconception of how we understand the ties that bind and the state of "being-in-common." Nora offers one way of conceiving this possibility. True memory reaches beyond the archivalizing desires of historicism, towards the perpetual cycles of anger and grief which connect private and public pain. "Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past" (Nora 8). Memory, then, functions as a bond which ties us not only to the group to which we are bound, but also to the perpetuality of the past in the present.

This claim for memory as dehistoricized history, as the process of being-in-common which Nancy wants to locate, seems to contradict Nancy's own understanding of memory. Nancy argues that "[m]emory is the (re)presentation of the past. It is the *living* past. History begins where memory ends. It begins where *representation* ends" (166). Nancy's evocative understanding of memory as a living past seems consonant with Nora's notion of true memory. But how is it that Nancy understands this living past, memory, as being antithetical to history whereas Nora argues that history is hostile to memory? I suggest that Nancy's understanding of memory prematurely forecloses on the possibilities of memory in "Finite History." For Nancy, *memory* is a representation and therefore it is subject to the whims of interpretation. For Nora, *history* is represenation and there it is subject to the whims of interpretation. This is more than just a problem of semantics. It is in Terdiman that we find a way to untangle this problem of history, memory and representation.

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opposed to seeing solely the substantive, "the now."

At the close of Present Past Terdiman argues powerfully for an understanding of memory as "delicate dialectic – between reproduction and representation, between fact and interpretation, between recollection and understanding" (357). Tracing a history of memory through its permutations in the writing of Mussett, Proust, Baudelaire and Freud, Terdiman notes that memory has been increasingly segregated as either recollection (what has been written off as simplistic and empiricist attempt to recall the facts of the past) or representation (memory as an unstable text which demands interpretation). Noting that memory as a reproduction of the past, as something which can be retrieved or "found" from within some kind of stable archive of the past, seems simplistic and overly positivist in an age of interpretation and the emphasis on the interpretation of the past in our contemporary critical era, Terdiman argues that this simplistic notion of retrieval and reproduction still retains a crucial space in our understanding of memory:

> But even if the memory model I have been calling *reproduction* now seems untenably simplistic, the effort to understand how memory has been understood in the modern period has made clear how misleading it would be to construe the alternative model – what I have termed *representation* – as insulated from any pressure exerted by the weight of the constituted and the contents of the past. (348)

Through Proust's idea of involuntary memory and Freud's system of the Unconscious, Terdiman argues, "look like the diegetic and psychoanalytic analogues of… stable and unerring repositories of the past" (349). Although the positivist notion of memory as something which can be retrieved intact, either in the jolt of an involuntary memory or in unconscious which slips its way to the surface of consciousness may seem archaic in an age of interpretation, "memory still incorporates a powerful intuition that the past is not just our own invention. *The past still answers us and still constrains our response to it*" (350). Attempting to find a way of thinking about memory that takes into account an intuitive sense of the past as both a fact of our experience and as an interpretation of our experience, Terdiman posits that it is in the tension between memory as fact and memory as interpretation, between reproduction and representation, that we must situate our understanding of the workings of memory. Terdiman suggests that the unhinging of the reproductive elements of memory from its representational elements is reductive and poses the delicate dialectic between memory as reproduction and memory as representation as a resolution.

It is within this dialectic that I situate Nora's true memory as a possible route to Nancy's call for understanding history as a "*coming* into presence" (166). Understood dialectically, the distance between Nora's understanding of history (as representation) and Nancy's understanding of memory (as representation) is not an abyssal divide, but a productive space of tension. True memory can only emerge hanging in delicate balance with the representational realm of interpretation. For Terdiman, this dialectic offers agential possibilities: "the *change* that human beings can bring to experience, which they then intervene in the reproduction of has been in order to reconceive of what might be. That is how the past is to be reinvented and the future remembered" (358-9). History as that which is to come lies then in the repository of true memory as it emerges in representational practices. In the writing of memory.

In the poetry of Fred Wah, I trace an extraordinary repository of true memory. I began this chapter by suggesting the possibilities in this poetry and I want to close with a continued meditation on the ways in which Waiting for Saskatchewan and Diamond Grill grab hold of memory, opening it to "the dialectic of remembering and forgetting" which is also the dialectic of reproducing memory and representing it (Nora 8). Rather than shying away from the myth of consanguinity, Wah embraces its burden, splitting its weight again and again with the "synchronous axe" – an understanding of time as looped, repeated and perpetually cycling (Waiting 6). Through his use of an interruptive and fragmented syntax embeded within a play between the prosaic and the poetic, the form of Wah's poetry suggests an on-going engagement with the problem of time and memory and the intrusion of the past into the present. Diamond Grill picks up on the earlier experiments with the prose-poem which Wah began with the "Elite" series in Waiting for Saskatchewan. The prose-poem is actually only one small part of the generic experiments in this poetry. Diamond Grill also deploys recipes, word collages where he re-writes a Chinese Head Tax certificate, filling in the blanks with his own insurgent answers (130), a poem which has a title and a footnote with nothing but blankness in between ("The Politics of the Family" 139) and the mixed media of advertisements, newspaper articles and menu language meshed into Wah's words. In the forms of his remembering, Wah's writing challenges the historicism of Chineseness.

On the surface, the narrative preoccupations of Diamond Grill seem fairly straightforward. The text is a remembering of a boyhood growing up in small town interior British Columbia, of working in his father's Chinese restaurant and an overall process of grieving for a father who died too young. Sugars is not entirely mistaken then to see something of a "storyline" in this text. And yet, the potential sentimentality of this narrative of remembering seems at odds with the experiments with form and technique which mark Diamond Grill. However, there is nothing simple or transparent about Wah's bereavement, about his recollection of the Diamond Grill. Yes, Diamond Grill is deeply nostalgic. But I argue that we need to consider nostalgia, not as a sentimental return to a fantasy of origins, but as a radical challenge to colonial oppressions and Eurocentric conceptions of history.

What the debate on Chineseness and its subsequent forbidding of nostalgia forgets is that nostalgia contains within its grammatical genealogy a narrative of colonialism. From an etymological perspective, nostalgia enters the world through colonial passages. In 1770, the crew on Captain James Cook's ship became so homesick that the ship's doctor named it as a pathology, nostalgia. The Oxford English Dictionary marks the first use of nostalgia in Cook's journal: "The greatest part of them [sc. the ship's company] were now pretty far gone with the longing for home which the Physicians have gone so far as to esteem a disease under the name of Nostalgia." Nostalgia then, has its etymological beginnings in English as a pathology that described a severe state of homesickness – a homesickness engendered by the work of colonial expansion.

As its etymological beginnings reveal, the nostalgia of our contemporary usage is deeply invested in the project of European colonization. In this context, nostalgia needs to be cured in order for the colonial project to continue. The crew must go on. Ships must continue to sail. Moreover, nostalgia must be cast as a disabling pathology because it interferes with the cosmopolitan project of the right of people, European people, to be at home anywhere in the world. And yet, this claim to cool cosmopolitanism is constantly belied by the colonizer's desire to reproduce their own homeland in the colonial outpost. What is British colonial architecture (any Governor's mansion, spaces such as the Raffles hotel in Singapore or the Parisian style opera house in Hanoi) if not one of the deepest expressions of nostalgia for an England that can only exist in the colonies? In his portrait of the nostalgic colonizer, Albert Memmi notes that

> [t]he colonialist appears to have forgotten the living reality of his home country. Over the years he has sculptured, in opposition to the colony, such a monument to his homeland… As though their homeland were an essential component of the collective superego of colonizers, its material features become quasi-ethical qualities. It is agreed that the mist is instrinsically superior to bright sunshine, as is green to ocher. The mother country thus combines only positive values, good climate, harmonious landscape, social discipline and exquisite liberty, beauty, morality, logic. (60)

Memmi accurately observes that logic of colonial fantasy of homeland also means the colonialist cannot go home. "Indeed, the idea of mother country is relative. Restored to its true self, it would vanish and would at the same time destroy the superhumanity of the colonialist… Why should he leave the only place in the world where, without being the founder of a city or a great captain, it is still possible to… bequeath one's name to geography?" (Memmi 60). And so the injunction against colonial homesickness must be pathologized and cured by the act of mourning and an adherence to a notion of adhering to an objective reality. In what Ashis Nandy through E. M. Forster noted as part of the hyper-masculinity of colonial adminstrative subjectivity, the "'underdeveloped heart'" (33-4): "This underdevelopment came both in the form of isolation of cognition from affect… and in the form of a new pathological fit between ideas and feeling" (Nandy 34). Thus, the increasingly religious duty to colonize primitive societies coincided with suppression of the "self for the sake of an imposed imperial identity" (Nandy 40). The correct colonial adminstrative subject might be homesick, pathologically nostalgic, but he will "get over it" and continue on with the business of colonial rule.

In the postcolonial era, this pathology is transferred onto the migrant subjects who have been displaced by colonialism. And thus, the immigrant diasporic subject's attachment to a sense of home which is stubbornly elsewhere becomes the antithesis of cosmopolitan globalism. These communities are declared ethnic enclaves. The desire to reproduce home is marked as charmingly naïve and also potentially dangerous in its insularity, in its seeming refusal to engage with the scene of the present. In the homesickness that functions as a continual reminder of the unhomeliness of diasporic subjects, this sadness is diagnosed as a pre-modern pathology that needs to be overcome – mourned and then released. The mark of a good or obedient diasporic subject would then be that of the cosmopolitan transnational who has mourned the loss of a home and let go of it, or, in the case of the Hong Kong entrepreneur who declares that he can live anywhere as long as it is near an international airport, one who forgoes the notion of a homeland altogether. From the view of the cosmopolitan transnational subject, there is something obstinately old-fashioned and out-of-step in the sadness of diasporic subjects who have not let go, who persist in their melancholia, who refuse the curative effects of mourning. And yet, as my tracing of nostalgia's etymology suggests, I locate a form of resistance in the refusal to mourn, to be cured of sadness. There is something coercive in the assumption that political rectitude would produce happiness.

In Wah's poetry, grieving resists the curative effects of mourning. It is a perpetual and recursive grieving which is closer to melancholy than mourning because the mourning remains unfinished. Wah's poetry circles again and again around the death of a father whose "heart crashed so young at 54" (Waiting 69). His father's death becomes an injunction not only against forgetting, but also against the linearity of mourning. In a poem from the 1981 Breathin' My Name With a Sigh and then re-printed in Waiting for Saskatchewan in order "to give some shape to the range of forms a particular content ('father')… that long poem has generated" ("Prefatory Note" Waiting) Wah writes of the circular legacy of grief:

> Father, when you died you left me
>
> with my own death. Until then I thought
>
> nothing of it. Now I see it's clear cut
>
> both genetic "bag" as well as choice. I know now
>
> I'd better find that double edge between you
>
> and your father so that the synchronous axe
>
> keeps splitting whatever this is the weight of

> I'm left holding. (Wah "Waiting" 6)[19]

The father's death is both an act of abandonment, "when you died you left me," and one which impresses the circular legacy of grieving death, "you left me/ with my own death." The enjambment which flows through the first two lines accentuates the legacy of bereavement. Writing of the past as a potentially malevolent force in Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu through Nietzsche's "The Uses and Abuses of History," Terdiman puts forward the possibility that "[m]emory is how the past – and the anxieties and suffering that the overwhelming weight of narration in the Recherche so powerfully represents within it – sustains and projects itself into a present that never chose such a prolongation" (183). In the prolongation of grief that the father's death produces, Wah poses that our present can be captured and determined by our pasts and that the weight of the burden of the past could be crippling. However, Wah suggests the possibility of eluding the full weight of the burden by looking for the double-edged axe which both separates and connects one father to another, one generation and the next. That is, what binds us, the intimate weight of familial pasts, can also cut us loose.

Further, the double-edge of the axe is synchronous, evoking temporality as another element of the tool which splits the burden. The dead leave to the living their own deaths. It is a bequest which passes on the weight of that which is between one father and another father, that which connects, the burden of consanguinity. For Wah, the weight of this burden, of the ties that bind, can only be borne by splitting the burden not as a linear legacy but as a circular synchronicity. The "synchronous axe" splits the weight of history by marking its returns, the synchronicity of history. The double-spacing between the lines emphasizes their function as "incomplete thought loops"[20] where the ending of each line promises a sense of closure which the next line always takes away. For example, the first line of the poem begins with the promise of a conventional statement about an inheritance: "Father, when you died you left me…" with your restaurant? with your car? The following line, "with my own death. Until then I thought" subverts the expectations posed in the first line and then poses a new possiblity of closure which is once again subverted by the subsquent line, "nothing of it. Now I see it's clear cut." Not only is the pronoun "it" ambiguous as to the point of its reference (perhaps "it" refers to the father's death but it could also refer to the narrator's own death) the line once again promises a "clear cut" clarity which is again subverted in the following line. Neither "genetic 'bag'" nor "choice" is clear cut at all. In this subversion of expectation, the lines of the poem become incomplete thought loops which circle back towards uncertainty with every promise of closure. Wah refuses the easy escape of mourning when he recognizes that death bequeaths death. It doesn't allow for "moving on" but rather a moving into the space of loss.

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[19] This poem is double-spaced in the original text and I have retained that spacing in this

The expression of loss emerges in the interrrogative gesture of so many of the poems – they are musings, questions which can have no answer because there is no one

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citation.

[20] Writing about bp nichols' long poems in "Making Strange Poetics" Wah suggests that "nichol uses 'a labyrinthine network of incomplete thought loops'" (217). In her consideration of Wah's poetry, Fisher suggests that Wah also employs the same method in his own poetry. Fisher wants to trace within these thought loops a series of (auto)biographical references. She argues that "[f]ollowing the 'incomplete thought loops'… requires constant references to the background sources of Wah's poetry" (Fisher 96). However, I suggest that Wah's use of incomplete thought loops functions less as a

to answer them. The address of the second person pronoun in his poems is almost always that of his father. The poems take on the feeling of an extended conversation which is not only never finished, but has never begun. "Elite 9" (pronounced "ee-light") from Waiting for Saskatchewan contains a series of questions which not only cannot be answered, but can only be asked because of the impossibility of an answer:

> When you returned from China via Victoria on Hong
> Kong Island and they put you in jail in Victoria on
> Vancouver Island because your birth certificate had been
> lost in the Medicine Hat City Hall fire and your parents
> couldn't prove you were born in Canada until they found
> your baptism records in the church or in the spring of
> 1948 when we moved to Nelson from Trail during the
> floods while Mao chased Chiang Kai-shek from the main-
> land to offshore Taiwan and the Generalissimo's picture
> hung in our house and on a wall above some plants and
> goldfish in the Chinese Nationalist League house down
> on Lake Street or when you arrive in China in 1916
> only four years old unable to speak Chinese and later in
> the roaring twenties when each time Grandpa gambled
> away your boat passage so you didn't get back to Canada
> until 1930 languageless again with anger locked up in the
> immigration cells on Juan de Fuca Strait or when your

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command to the reader to run back and research the autobiographical sources of his

> heart crashed so young at 54 as you fell from mom's arms
> to the dance floor did you see islands? (Waiting 69)[21]

Wah writes an extended, unanswerable question which hangs sparsely on the page and yet articulates an entire history of grieving and sadness. "Elite 9" is studded with personal detail – the precision of dates, 1948, 1916, 1930, and the precision of geography, China, Victoria, Hong Kong, Vancouver Island, Nelson, Taiwan, Trail, Lake Street, Juan de Fuca Strait. While these details anchor the poem within a personal narrative of migration, they also suggest a connection to a larger narrative of migration. "Elite 9" functions as an evocation of Benjamin's conception of origins as a stream of emergence. The disappearance of the text of origin, the birth certificate, emerges again in the baptism records. And these are simply part of the larger stream of a narrative which is bracketed by the "languageless" anguish of unjust imprisonment, of islands of isolation and incarceration. The unpunctuated stream of Wah's unanswerable question "restores and re-establishes" a history of dislocation which, in Benjamin's sense, can only be "imperfect and incomplete" (45). The question he closes with, "did you see islands?" hangs imperfectly, incomplete and almost unable to bear the weight of all the subordinate clauses which precede it.

Wah's foregrounding of the subordinate clauses in "Elite 9" suggests the intimate imbrications of personal histories with public ones. In the catena of relative clauses which surge persistently, Wah highlights the superordinancy of the subordinate. He gives primacy to histories which have been relegated to the realm of the secondary. Further, the

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poetry than it is an exploration of time and alternative temporality.

stacking of relative clauses also creates a series of incomplete thought loops, thoughts which begin but don't quite end, which recur around and through the question, did you see islands? The use of incomplete loops in "Elite 9" brings me back to his reconception of memory and resonates with Terdiman's argument: "But once we admit the ways – whether subtle and subterranean, or entirely overt – by which this eerie domination of *now* by *then* can happen, then memory turns labyrinthine" (346). In this sense, the temporality of the poetry is not a simple circularity, but a more elliptical movement which hangs on the edge of the unfinshed.

Within this labyrinthine memory, the incompleteness of private grief merges in the incompleteness of public grief. It is not that Wah's father "represents" an entire community but that "Elite 9" suggests a way in which the line which separates the personal and the public history is nothing more than a historicist construction where the personal is always subordinated to the larger narratives of historical progression. Wah's invocation of historical events which mark the trans-Pacific experiences of diaspora, Mao's rise, the Nationalist campaign, the incarceration of incoming Chinese immigrants on Juan de Fuca Strait suggest a relationship to an experience of dislocation which is at once private and public, personal and also communal.

The persistence of grief structured in the melancholy of Wah's mourning with no end, the questions which cannot be answered, function as a form of resistance. The refusal to be cured of sadness is an affect working against the lures of assimilation. In the The Melancholy of Race Ann Anlin Cheng suggests that racialized communities in the

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[21] Although the existence of line breaks in a prose-poem is ambiguous and there is no clear general protocol for citation, I have chosen to retain the original line breaks in my citations of Wah's prose-poems.

United States (the site of her investigation) are bound not by ethnicity but by grief. Reconsidering Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior within this context of the bonds and bounds of grieving, Cheng suggests that private grief teaches "us about the disadvantages and advantages of forming a collective communal identity united not by ethnic homogeneity but by racial grievance" (91). For Cheng, the cultural assumptions around health which preoccupy dominant American culture are questionable at best and the presumption of a "cure" "remains dubious so long as health and pathology remain tethered to race and so long as assimilation reinforces the logic of incorporation that in turn repeats and prolongs the susceptibility of the already susceptible racialized body" (94). Moreover, the idea of a cure can function as a form of coercion: "The question of how to 'get over' the racial issue has profound implications for the future of social relations in America. American idealization of health, cure, and mourning (i.e. 'getting over' something, or "moving on") is itself symptomatic of the culture's attachment to coercive normality" (Cheng 95). In its preoccupation with the question of grief, the desire to speak to the dead and the awareness of the ways in which death bequeaths death, Wah's poetry rejects the curative norms of mourning, refusing to fully let go of the father who fell too young, whose heart was broken too soon.

In the refusal to "get over it" there is a stubborn attachment to the rawness of the displacement, of, in the case of Chinese Canadian migrant history, a history of labour exploitation, indirect indenture and head tax racism. In this sense, the refusal to be cured functions as a persistent reminder of the hostility of the present location. The nostalgic diasporic subject is not just someone who wallows in the familiar comfort of Chinatown enclaves or fantasies about an idealized homeland to which she can never return, but an agential reminder of the unhomeliness of a place where she will be continually cast as migrant, from away. Nostalgia may be hostile to history, in the sense of a history of teleological progression, but it is not necessarily hostile to memory. Instead, it suggests that there might be another register of remembering that is embedded not in history, but in the body.

In the first line of his acknowledgments, Wah identifies Diamond Grill as a biotext (Diamond Acknowledgements). In keeping with the imperatives of biotext as a genre, Wah plays with the tension between the biological and the textual throughout the Diamond Grill poems. His invocation of the term specifically marks Diamond Grill as a text which seeks to exceed the autobiographical. The term biotext comes from George Bowering, one of Wah's fellow-travellers in the Tish movement, who argued that the biotext privileged the processual elements of life-writing. As opposed to autobiography where the text replaces the writer, Bowering suggests that the biotext is "an extension of him" (24). Joanne Saul suggests that

> "[b]iotext" captures the tension at work between the thematic content and the linguistic and formal aspects of the texts, between the fragments of a life being lived, the "bio" (with its emphasis on the self, the family, origins, and genealogy), and the "text," the site where these various aspects are in the process of being articulated in writing. Rather than admitting a gap between self and text, "biotext" foregrounds the writer's efforts to articulate him or her self through the writing process" (261).

In biography the tension between the biological and the graphic act of writing is suppressed historicism's narrative imperative. In the biotext, the textual and the biological are irreducible to each other. I read in Diamond Grill a powerful meditation on the relationship between the corporeal and the textual which is not just about the articulation of the self, as Saul suggests, but also about the ways in which the body leaps into enacting its own textuality.

Diamond Grill functions as a perpetually incomplete archive of these moments when the body writes, of an engrammic text. Warning his reader against the desire to read autobiographically, Wah proposes that Diamond Grill must be read in tension with ideas of truth. "These are not true stories but, rather, *poses or postures*, necessitated, as I hope is clear in the text, by faking it" (Acknowledgements Diamond my emphasis). What I want to hang onto in this hovering between the edges of the real and the fake, truth and fiction, is Wah's description of his poetry as "poses and postures." It is in the poses and postures of our bodies moving through space, looped in time, that true memory, that which has taken refuge in the secret and perhaps often involuntary gestures of the body, emerges. Read as poses and postures, Diamond Grill is a haunting catalogue of secret gestures which are painfully public because they are shared. Wah captures the passing on of the secret gesture in the expression/explosion of anger and pain and the way in which the private gesture touches back onto a collective one – in the moments when something from outside, from way back, erupts into the surface of the contemporary. In "Last Christmas when I/ Grabbed you by the," grief bequeaths grief and anger carries through, a parallel legacy reaching far back:

> Last Christmas when I
>
> Grabbed you by the
>
> shoulders and shook you from so much anger welled up in me after

> days of frustration at your indecision and malaise the fire reaching
> into my eyes and mouth for you to smarten up and pay attention to
> our world, totally enraged there on the stairs at some little thing
> you'd said or done, that, that was from that well deep within me
> and at least my father his who knows now your anger too
> could be ours this pit of something having gone on but only surfac-
> ing like Ahab's whale unpredictably in a sudden eruption – not just
> being pissed off but all the way back to something not mine, some-
> thing I brought with me from before the first angry scream at birth
> caught deep back in the throat despite me and now you have it too… (Diamond 72)

In the moment of being more than just pissed off, of something which reaches all the way back to something before even the first angry scream of childbirth, Wah gestures to the existence of a memory which is outside of him and yet deep within him, "something not mine… caught deep back in the throat… and now you have it too." In the thrice repeated descriptive pronoun "that" in the fifth line – "that, that was from that well deep within me" – we can hear the cracking stab of anger passed along through the three generations of the poem. This is the anger which is not the son's, nor even perhaps the father's, but is now the daughter's too. The seamlessness of Wah's prose, its movement through and around, in Charles Olson's words, "the swift current of the syllable" (qtd in Banting 99) mimics the ebb and eruption of the gestures which bind, the memory that is blind to all but those that it binds.

Loss, pain and anger move inward not only through the body, but also through and between generations. An earlier poem, "my father hurt-/ing," articulates loss as a process which flows "very very far/ inside" both as a form of alienation between generations, but also as that which connects those same alienated generations.

> my father hurt-
> ing at the table
> sitting hurting
> at suppertime
> deep inside very
> far down inside
> because I can't stand the ginger
> in the beef and greens
> he cooked for us tonight
> and years later tonight
> that look on his face
> appears now on mine
> my children
> my food
> their food
> my father
> their father
> me mine
> *the* father

very far
very very far
inside (Waiting 7)

The poem reels, a tunnel inward down the page, down the lines of descent and the explosive resentment of taste. The hurting which emerges in the enjambment of the first four lines speaks to a legacy of pain which carries down through the lines of the remainder of the poem. In a later prose-poem about ginger, Wah speaks of ginger as a "site of implicit racial qualification" where a taste for ginger stands in for a Chineseness that is accepted, swallowed, in all of its "delicate pungency" (Diamond 11). Around ginger, "[t]his knurled suffix of gradated foreignicity," the secret gestures of hurt and anger will superimpose themselves upon one generation and then the next and the next after that. And in the superimposition of gesture along the lines of the page, of descent, Wah collapses the expanse of time in the repetition of his temporal reference: "he cooked for us tonight/and years later tonight." Tonight and tonight again, the presence of the past emerges repeatedly in unexpected spaces of true memory, the passing on of gesture, of grimace, of taste: "that look on his face/ appears now on mine." In the lines "my food/ their food/ my father/ their father/ me mine" – in the single melodic line of, in Giorgio Agamben's words, "the schism between sound and sense"[22] – homophony produces homophyly. The body recurs in the reiteration of "food" and "father." And it is at the level of taste, a transgenerational recurrence of gesture, of the body writing itself through a very old code, that we can capture the glimpse of the painful transpiring of memory's transmission.

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[22] Citing the medieval Italian poet Nicolò Tobino's definition of enjambment, in The End of the Poem Agamben notes that "'[i]t often happens that the rhyme ends, without the meaning of the sentence having been complete" (*Multiocenes enim accidit quod, finita consonantia, adhuc sensus orationis non est finitus*). All poetic institutions participate in this noncoincidence, this schism of sound and sense – rhyme no less than caesura. For what is rhyme if not a disjunction between a semiotic event (the repetition of a sound)

For Wah, the transmission of memory occurs not only in the immediacy of familial bodies at suppertime, but also into strange intimacies of a transpacific smell-taste experience. Writing about *juk*, a savoury rice soup that Wah's family (and mine and I wonder how many others?) makes with leftovers, Wah suggests a way in which taste, as it surges along the tongue and through the neural networks of the body, functions as one of the refuges of the body.

> Juk is even better than bird's-nest soup, though both soups share an instrinsic proprioceptive synapse: memory. While slurping a bowl of juk with the January snow still swirling outside, the memory of the bird itself, only a few weeks old, triangulates with a smoky star-filled night in China. Likewise, with the gelatinous bird's-nest soup, the taste carries images of men climbing the walls of dark caves in Yunan collecting the spaghetti-like transluscent strands of bird's nests, the frightened cries of the swallows themselves as piercing as a foreign language. (Diamond 168)

The proprioceptor is a sensory nerve ending in muscles, tendons, and joints that provides a sense of the body's position by responding to stimuli from within the body. In suggesting that juk and bird's nest soup share a proprioceptive synapse, memory, Wah situates the body as a crucial site of memory. The body, in this poem, does not simply

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and a semantic event, a disjunction that brings the mind to expect a meaningful analogy where it can find only homophony?" (110).

exist abstractly in space, but is aware through a series of synaptic jolts of its location in particular geographies, of its displacement and emplacement.

Wah's suggestion signals the substantial work accomplished in neuropsychology, experimental psychology and work on cognition in the sciences and pushes against the limits of this knowledge at the same time. While there had been some debate about the precise pathways of the connections, scientists have known for a long time that there is a connection between the physiological response of memory and that of smell, or, in the rational language of science, "that olfactory inputs reach the hippocampus through connections with the entorhinal cortex and that the hippocampus has outputs that influence the primary olfactory complex" (Mair, Harrison and Flint 50). The hippocampus, the part of our brain which is widely understood as, in lay terms, "the seat of memory," is connected to the ways in which we recognize and process the smells we encounter. Wah takes this scientific body of knowledge even further though when he suggests that taste can evoke a memory which is not specific to an individual body, but a memory which taps into a transpacific archive of experience. Taste can carry within it the sense of a particular location. Wah's identification of taste as a proprioceptive synapse suggests a way in which taste and smell situate the body not only in space but also within a larger geography. In this sense, Wah's writing pushes the scientific rationale of memory and poses a challenge to it, asserting another order of experience where the synapse produces a syndetic experience across physical space, gesturing towards a collectivity of experience. In "[t]hese straits and islands/ of the blood… [b]iology recapitulates geography; place becomes an island in the/ blood" (Diamond 23). Juk is more than just a highly personalized synapse and the body maps onto the transpacific in the way that the geography of transpacific migration has mapped itself onto a collective body. "Places become buttons of feeling and colour" (Diamond 22).

Not only does Wah write of the way the body positions itself in geographical space and place through a complex chain of synaptic responses through the proprioceptive workings of memory, he also positions his reader as well. Wah's use of the imperative in several of the Diamond Grill poems conducts the reader through a series of motions, leading us both inward and outward at the same time In poem about Chinese turnip, *lo bok*, Wah guides us into the geography of longing. He writes of

> a craving for some Chinese
> food taste that I haven't been able to pin down. An absence that
> gnaws at sensation and memory. An undefined taste, not in the
> mouth but down some blind alley of the mind. (Diamond 67)

He describes stumbling across this un-named but not forgotten taste in a Chinese food market. Seeing a pile of Chinese turnips being rapidly picked over by numerous shoppers, he asks a woman in the market how to use the vegetable. Thus, he finds this lost taste and invites his reader into the space of the fulfillment of craving. He tells us that we must:

> Buy a good sized Chinese white turnip, or lo bok. Even Safeway will sometimes carry them. Start the dish by washing and setting aside to soak about a tablespoon of small, dried shrimp. Peel the turnip and cut it up into french-fry sized strips. Blanch by bringing to a boil and then take out and pour cold water over. Slice and stir-fry some beef with garlic and soy sauce. You can use a little onion if

> you want to (my mother doesn't). Strain the cooled turnips and add them to the stir-fry along with the shrimp and the water it's been soaking in. Simmer the liquid until the turnip just starts to soften. Add a little more water if necessary and serve thin that way or thicken with a little corn starch. During cooking the lo bok turns from white to a light taupe. The taste roots itself as a miscegenated bitterness of soil and ocean transfused by the dark brown soya into guttural pungency. (67)

He repeats these instructions as the woman at the market would have given them to him. Wah takes our hand and asks us to follow him through that blind alley of the mind where there might be an absence gnawing at sensation and memory. This is not food as a sentimental return to a utopic past. This is not about comfort food only as comfort food. This is about the process of memory – of the body moving through space, preparing food and retracing with another body the route towards a memory where the materiality of food has left its trace, viscerally forcing the past into the present. Wah's instructions for cooking *lo bok* are not a recipe, but a repetition of the way the diasporic body transforms the rawness of absence into the presence of cooked turnip rooting itself in the memory of the body. Finding the lost taste of lo bok is not so much a cause of celebration in Wah's text, as it is a sad remembering of "the bitterness of soil and ocean," of the "guttural pungency" of memory.

It is important that Wah locates this lost taste from a stranger. The route he poses for a diasporic memory of the body occurs in the community of dislocation, of one stranger bringing another stranger into a memory. The nostalgia for *lo bok* is one that emerges in dislocation and can only be re-experienced in dislocation. He posits unabashedly the possibility of collectivity in dislocation. Diasporic nostalgia is not for a particular homeland necessarily, or even for lo bok specifically, but for a sense of the communal bound by the alienations of dislocation.

There is a collectivity to the processes of Wah's remembering. He has extended a hand towards others who have lost the taste of *lo bok* and asked them to move through the kitchen with him, simmering the liquid, soaking the shrimp. The imperative of Wah's language draws us into the internal space of personal craving and towards the public one of its fulfillment in a Chinatown market and the recipe which is not so much a recipe as a record of the process of re-tracing the body's movement in space. The collectivity of *lo bok* roots itself in the possibility of future repetitions by different bodies in differently dislocated situations. In this sense, the path of nostalgia is not only a reaching back into memory, into the past, but also a process of reaching forward and outward, away from individual longing and into process of shared memory in the preparation of lo bok.

In her two-part essay, "The Memory of the Senses," Nadia Seremetakis situates taste as a problem of collective cultural memory. She proposes that taste and smell as a fundamental part of memory can be recuperated by returning to the Greek roots of nostalgia. Seremetakis argues that nostalgia has been fundamentally misread in contemporary culture. Tracing the Greek root of the word, Seremetakis asserts that nostalgia is deeply corporeal and closely connected to the workings of memory and history:

> In Greek the *nostalghó* is a composite of *nostó* and *alghó*. *Nostó* means I return, I travel back (back to homeland); the noun *nóstos* means the return, the journey,

> while *á-nostos* means without taste …*Alghó* means I feel pain, I ache for, and the noun *alghós* characterizes one's pain in soul and body, buring pain (*kaimós*). Thus *nostalghía* is the desire or longing with burning pain to journey. It also evokes the sensory dimension of memory in exile and estrangement… In this sense, *nostalghía* is linked to the personal consequences of historicizing sensory experience which is conceived as a painful bodily and emotional journey. (4)

For Seremetakis, "[t]he senses are also implicated in historical interpretation as witnesses or record-keepers of material experience"(6). In this understanding, nostalgia is a means through which the body bears the record of experiences rooted in the materiality of the day to day. Although Seremetakis suggests that nostalgia has been undervalued and misread in contemporary western thought, I want to take her project one step further and propose that the relegation of nostalgia to the realm of the sentimental and inconsequential needs to be read within a specific history of European enlightenment's denial of sensual memory as a form of history. In Scent, Annick le Guèrer traces the philosophical suppression of taste and smell as legitimate routes to knowledge. From Hegel to Freud, le Guèrer locates a general anathema in enlightenment thought to the odiferous and therefore uncivilized space of the "lesser" senses.[23] Along with le Guèrer,

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[23] Scent devotes approximately one chapter to each of the major enlightenment thinkers. I will very briefly summarize le Guèrer's discussion. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European thought elevated sight as the primary sense of civilized man. Darwin's theory of evolution argued that bipedalism lifted homo sapiens from dependence on the odors of the ground and upwards towards development relying mainly on sight. Following Darwin, Freud suggested that infants revelling in the world of odors would grow into an increasing appreciation of visual pleasures. Adults who clung to smell in their pleasures were thus arrested in their development. Hegel linked the separation between the forehead and the nose and lips as a clear sign of the superiority of the mind and sight over smell and taste. Smell, and in relation to it taste, were repeatedly devalued as senses in a European intellectual project that sought again and again to differentiate the civilized

Classen, Howes and Synnott in Aroma uncover the deliberate suppression of smell because of its intensely corporeal and personal nature. Unlike sight, where one's relationship to the object does not affect the object itself, smell shifts and changes according to the subject of its encounter. Smell refuses abstraction. Despite the advances of the chemical reproduction of certain scents, smell is irreproducible; it frustrates a modernity concerned with mechanical reproduction. Classen, Howes and Synnott argue that "smell has been marginalized because it is felt to threaten the abstract and impersonal regime of modernity by virtue of its radical interiority, its boundary-transgressing propensities and its emotional potency" (5). The denial of taste and smell to function as repositories of alternative histories and true memories is an integral part of the project of European enlightenment to maintain a particular social order. Bringing us back to Nora in conjunction with Seremetakis, we can say that the suppression of smell and taste in enlightenment thinking is closely related to the project of the obliteration of memory through history.

As I have been suggesting throughout this discussion, against the obliteration of memory, Diamond Grill powerfully asserts a poetics of memory which is deeply embedded in the corporeality of the racialized diasporic body. For Wah, in the "half dream in the still-dark breathing silence,"[24] we can find the "silent rehearsal of/ the memory of taste" where "the first language/ behind his closed eyes is a dreamy play-by-play about making beef/ and lotus root soup" (Diamond 174). In the assertion that

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from the primitive. For a fascinating and thorough discussion of smell and the French body politic, please see also Alain Corbin's The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination.

[24] This line, as with all other first lines in the book, is written in capitals in the text.

memory and taste can be a "first language" where the tongue waters "at the palpable flavour of words," Wah traces another text of memory which refuses the historicity of a history that has denied memory its subjecting force (Diamond 174).

In this first language of smell and taste – what Mark Libin has called the grammar of smell-taste in the context of his study of Hiromo Goto's A Chorus of Mushrooms[25] – the sensual triggers the memorial. Of course, this is not a new idea. Proust's tea-soaked madeleine is perhaps one of the more famous examples of the intimacies of taste and smell and their relation to memory. And yet, in seeming contradiction to the bitterness and "guttural pungencies" of Wah's remembering, the memory project epitomized by Proust has concentrated upon the ways in which involuntary memory, a concept which coincidentally echos Nora's idea of true memory, recalls the sun-drenched memories of pleasure. We have taken for granted that Proust's *mémoire involuntaire* is about the evocation of happy memories, of joy. Richard Terdiman warns that "Proustian memory has become the sort of habit Proust warned us against: so familiar that it escapes definition, so celebrated that it has lost its critical edge" (151-2). Terdiman rips the discussion away from the habit with which we have come to talk about memory in Proust and instead reads Proust against the grain of Proust himself: "Proust tells us that involuntary memory engenders joy. I want rather to explore the hypothesis that a profound experience of *unhappiness* systematically associates itself with these epiphanies" (212). Sifting through the mass of Proust's three-thousand-page memorial to memory, Terdiman convincingly argues that "the phenomena Proust narrates as involuntary memory uncannily recalls the description in Freud of traumatic injury and involuntary neurotic reminiscence" (200). This association of the realm of involuntary memory to Freudian trauma brings me to Anne Cheng's linking of trauma with transmission in the conceptualization of racial memory. Reading through Freud's use of Le Bon in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, Cheng argues that "the inheritance of racial memory is really a kind of *traumatic transmission* for Freud, where what is transmitted is not the event itself or the kernel but the trauma attached to the kernel" (153).[26] Cheng's reading is extremely suggestive for a way of conceptualizing transmission in diaspora, the way in which the sadness of diaspora passes on.

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[25] Mark Libin's discussion of food and longing in Goto's text argues for a way of seeing smell-taste as a language which exceeds written English: "Goto's narrators strive to describe the smells and tastes of food while demonstrating how these olfactory, gustatory experiences exceed the grammar and vocabulary of the English language" (Libin 132). Moreover, in an echo of Wah's own insistence on the way in which food relates to an act of reaching back against the currents of cultural displacement, Libin notes that "[i]t is the language of food that remains insistently in place when the rest of culture is displaced, revealing the power of signification Goto's texts invest in food" (132).

This idea of traumatic transmission brings me back to where I began in this chapter. What is it that connects subjects in diaspora to one another? How do we trace these connections outside of the binds of historicist visions of community emergence? In the final chapter of The Black Atlantic, Gilroy's concept of the condition of being in pain, which is related to the "living memory and the slave sublime" of the chapter's title, argues for an understanding of trauma as constitutive of the black diasporic imagination. Writing of black musical forms, Gilroy suggests that

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[26] Taking as her departure point Sander Gilman's Freud, Race, Gender, Cheng's argument focuses on Freud's response to Le Bon's anti-Semitism and the way in which many of Freud's texts retain a sense of a collective Jewish identity despite his own desire to unhinge "the idea of race away from the body… into the realm of the psychological" (Cheng 152). However, Cheng note that the idea of a collective racial consciousness continues to retain its purchase on Freud's analyses and argues that "for Freud, in the case of Jewish history, cultural self-consciousness as the marginalized and the suppressed from *the* factor justifying the continued collectivity of the Jewish people as a people. In his lecture on anxiety (1917) he argues that the 'core' of 'anxiety' is the repetition of some particular significant experience: 'This experience could only be a very early impression of a very general nature, placed in the prehistory, not of the individual but of the species… or, one might add, in the prehistory of race'… Freud has replaced Le Bon's biologism with another kind of biologism, in this case, a biologism of traumatic memory" (153). Cheng's reading of Freud echos with my own discussion of the trauma

> [b]eing in pain encompasses both a radical, personalised enregistration of time and a diachronic understanding of language… It is what [Richard] Wright struggled to describe when… he spoke of a "tradition of bitterness … so complex, that most white people would think upon examining it, that most Negroes had embedded in their flesh and bones some peculiar propensity towards lamenting and complaining. (203)

What Gilroy is trying to distinguish is a black cultural tradition which resists cultural nationalism without being evacuated of its blackness. While David Scott shares with Gilroy the desire to meet this demand of black diaspora criticism, to think through the ways in which a cultural tradition might be recognizably and yet not essentially black, he suggests that Gilroy's concept still depends upon a positivism, "upon the *identification of positive* social and cultural features" (122). He locates this dependance on positivism in Gilroy's idea of identifiable formal innovations in black cultural production. Scott cites the following passage from Gilroy:

> The most enduring Africanism of all is not therefore specifiable as the *content* of black Atlantic cultures. It can be seen instead not just in the central place that all these cultures give to music use and music making, but in the ubiquity of

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of dislocation as a constitutive affect in thinking through the formation of diasporic communities.

> antiphonal, social *forms* that underpin and enclose the plurality of black cultures in the western hemisphere. (Gilroy 200, Scott's emphasis)

Scott's emphasis highlights Gilroy's separation between form and content. For Scott, this idea of identifiably black antiphonal forms underpinning black culture as separate from the content of that cultural production suggests a continued reliance upon authorizing truth discourses such as Anthropology which seek to positively capture blackness. Of course, the separation of form and content in Gilroy's effort to articulate blackness brings us back to where the chapter began – the polarization of Wah criticism between form and content. Scott's resolution lies in thinking of "tradition" as "*a socially embodied and historically extended argument*" where the "common possession" of Slavery and Africa "depends upon a play of conflict and contention. It is a space of dispute as much as consensus, of discord as much as accord" (124). In looking at sensual memory in Wah's poetry, I want to hang on to Gilroy's emphasis on the constitutive effects of pain and their transmission across space and time and fold it back into Scott's resolution of "tradition as an embodied argument" (122).

Part of that folding occurs in the shift in the form-content debates in the Tish editorials from the idea of *content* to that of *testimony*. In 1962, in a series of letters to the editor to Tish, the discussion between form and content was recast, and the idea of form became juxtaposed to *testimony* rather than content. Or rather, content came to be understood as testimony. It was a shift originally marked by Robert Duncan whom Frank Davey references in the opening lines of his Tish 10 editorial: "Robert Duncan has said that the age of the masterwork is dead – that ours is the age of testimony. Which, if I read it right, takes the emphasis away from 'the work of art' and places it back on the creator and his[27] concerns" (Davey 201). Of course, many people thought Davey got it wrong and told him so. Among them, Denise Levertov had this to say in a letter published in Tish 11:

> You [Davey] make it sound as if *testimony* and *the work of art as an independent entity* were mutually exclusive. I believe this is a dangerous mistake. The 'testimony', I believe, can't be made *without* that craft that makes of it an 'indendepent entity.' Or: 'Testimony' is a soundless opening of the mouth unless craft forms it into speech or song… What I feel before living works of art is as much *testimony* as *form* and *form* as *testimony…*
>
> I say: *No possibility of viable form without genuine experience.*
>
> But: *No possibility of communicating experience* (i.e. testimony) *without crafted form.* (Davey 223)

Levertov's re-situating of content as testimony, as a kind of bearing witness to experience, opens up the old form and content debate into the problem of memory and its expression. Levertov socializes the form-content axis and recasts it as a literary and artistic investment in social memory; the matter of poetry, its material consequences, is contingent upon its crafting. I suggested at the beginning of this chapter that the general body of Wah criticism which has segregrated concerns around form and content did a disservice to the interventions of his poetry. Now, at the close of the chapter, I want to reinforce the imbrication of form and content, not in the oft cited Robert Creeley dictum

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[27] Despite the rebellious energy of the Tish movement and despite their appreciation for the work of Denise Levertov and despite publishing some of the early poems of Gwendolen MacEwen, perhaps like many countercultural movements of its time, Tish was unfortunately still very unselfconsciously "boy" or dominated by a presumption of

("form is never more than an extension of content") but in the Levertovian sense of form's responsibility as a means through which testimony may emerge. Wah's poetry testifies to the experience of a sensual memory both rooted and routed in a collectivity based on dislocation – a diasporic collectivity.

This is a collectivity born out of and borne in shared longing, a craving which cannot be suppressed in the abstractions of identity politics. Let me suggest that the "common possession," to return to David Scott's phrase, of Chinese diaspora culture lies not in animating figures such as Indenture and Asia – not only because it is wrong to suggest that the experience of indenture and the idea of Asia are at all parallel to Slavery and Africa[28] – but in the idiosyncratic inheritance of, in Wah's evocation, "real Chinese

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male poetic tradition. It also emerged from what was obviously a tightly-knit sense of comaraderie which did not explicitly include women poets.

[28] While the history and emergence of the use of Asian indentured labour is contingent on the history of slavery, I do not see the two as comparable histories. When slavery was abolished in the mid-nineteenth century in most European colonies, there was a concerted effort to recruit indentured labour from Asia (largely from India and southern China) to take the place of the slave labour in the colonies. What became known as *la trata amarilla* in Latin American or the coolie trade in Anglophone colonies resulted in the large-scale displacement of Asian populations. These populations arguably form the beginnings of most Asian diasporic communities in Australia, North and South America, and southern Africa for example. Please see Walter Look Lai's Indentured Labour, Carribean Sugar, Kay Saunder's Indentured Labour in the British Empire, and Lal, Munro and Beechart's Plantation Workers for a more extensive history of Asian indentured labour. Clearly, this history is intimately linked to that of slavery and the development of the black diaspora. I make particular note of their dissimilarity in deference to what I understand as the exemplarity of slavery and the black diaspora. This is not so much about a comparability of atrocities experienced by either population, but more about the ways in which the unparalleled scale of dislocation and oppression experienced by black communities created forms of resistance which have, in almost every instance, set the ground for other diasporic and minority resistances to come. I share with Khachig Tololyan the view that "even though racism is important to diasporization (in that it simultaneously maintains enclaves and increases the possibility of the emergence of diasporas in the case of people of colour, from Chinese to Latinos), most such racism differs at least in degree from the situation faced by African Americans in the US. This community remains exceptional, not least in its formation as a diaspora"

food… ox tail/ soup, deep fried cod, chicken with pineapple and lichee – things we/ don't always taste willingly but forever after crave" (Diamond 46). It is not that the sadness of indenture and dislocation is not relevant to this common possession. Rather, as I argued in Chapter One, it is constitutive of it. However, the problem that this chapter wants to attend to is the way in which this sadness has been transmitted. It is within this question of transmission that I propose "real Chinese food," as the mode by which the inheritance of unresolved racial grief surges to the surface of the everday.

Echoing Wah, I use this phrase, "real Chinese food," in order to emphasize the discourse of dissensus and consensus which the idea of "real Chinese food" evokes. This is contested terrain. As Scott argues, it is this contestedness that we should treasure. As my discussion of Wah's poetry has emphasized, I am not interested in "real Chinese food" as an identifiable object of debate but rather the experience of it, of taste, craving, longing. In addition to oxtail soup and chicken with pineapple and lichee, we might also add sweet and sour pork, beef and greens with slivered ginger, lotus root soup, juk. As the debate on Chineseness reveals, the point of "real Chinese" is not an authorized cultural authenticity, about getting the "right" Chinese food, but about authenticating the experience of craving, longing for something which defies the binds of historicism – a collective gustatory desire.

To authenticate an experience, a desire, is not to authorize it. To authenticate the possibility of a collective gustatory desire as a route to an alternative history, as I have been arguing, is simply to give credence to a mode of knowing which has been

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("Rethinking" 23). For a discussion of black subjectivity's foundational role in the formation of the modern European subject, in addition to Gilroy's discussion of the suppressed and mis-named as sentimental. As Keya Ganguly presciently argues, "the question of authenticity has more to do with the phenomenal click of the presence of the past, of some ideal of truth occluded (but now merely fantasized), than it does with the retroactive click of deferred action in which experience becomes the remembrance of something that was never true in the first place" (134). "Real Chinese food" then is the mode by which "the phenomenal click of the presence of the past" surges through the neural networks of the body to produce a proprioceptive synapse: memory. It is a synapse which situates the body in space, which mediates the gap between the past and the present, between China and Chineseness, in order to make sense of a longing for plain white rice, or lo bok cooked simmered in soy with shrimp. In an interview with Jonathan Goddard, Wah articulates the relationship between food and racialized memory, with a characteristic simplicity which confounds transparency: "Race is not something you can feel or recognize, and that's one of the things I'm investigating in [Waiting for Saskatchewan]. It turns out race is food. I feel Chinese because of the food I enjoy, and that's because my father cooked Chinese food. But I don't know what it feels like to feel Chinese" (41). Wah's deceptively simple answer, I feel Chinese because I like the food my father cooked, immediately turns in on itself in the declaration, But I don't know what it feels like to feel Chinese. I read in Wah's answer not a contradiction but a contralateral positioning of Chineseness. To know what it feels like to feel Chinese works in conjunction with its opposite, with what not knowing what it feels like to feel Chinese. Knowing Chineseness can only emerge in dialectical tension with not knowing. Within this uncertainty, the ebb and flow of memory emerges.

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counter culture of modernity in The Black Atlantic, please see also Susan Buck-Morss'

Sensual memory, the synaptic surge which makes the tongue water, reaches back only to reach forward at the same time and this sychronicity of the past and the present invokes an alternative temporality. Turning once again to Terdiman, we can see that the memory which has preoccupied this chapter is one that is, to recall Jean-Luc Nancy, a coming-into-presence:

> Involuntary memory, which premises the restoration of the past, is better understood as the intimation of an alterity potential in our present. Call it a "not-yet," since we lack other temporalities where it might conceptually be lodged. In any case it is surely evident that Proust's privileged form of memory does not only define a singular relation with time gone by. Involuntary memory is not just about the past. (Terdiman 238)

The "not-yet" of memory brings us back to Nancy's vision of community as "being-in-common" which emerges from history as "what shall be thought" (151, 152). The history of what shall be thought lies in memory. Memory enables the state of being-in-common as a perpetual possibility, a state which Giorgio Agamben invokes as the coming community. At the close of The Coming Community, Agamben leaves us with a provocation for a politics of identity which poses a radical challenge to state power through a reconceptualization of community as that which is to come. "In the final instance the State can recognize any claim for identity – even that of a State identity within a State (the recent history of relations between the State and terrorism is an eloquent confirmation of this fact). What the State cannot tolerate in any way, however, is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-

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"Hegel and Haiti."

belong without any representable condition of belonging" (Coming 85). Agamben is not suggesting that communities have no identity, but that their radical challenge lies in an understanding of belonging which is not clearly recognizable, not chartable in historicist histories or encapsulated by language.

In his introduction to Peter Bürger's Theory of the Avant-Garde, Jochen Schulte-Sasse suggests that "there might exist a *material* organization of social reality external to language and imprinted on our psyche (and physical being), written into our existence via the mechanisms as well as the materials of cultural reproduction" (xxvii). He then goes on to highlight the way in which material experience poses a challenge to the dominance of historicism: "Just as the play of signifiers contradicts and undermines any claim of possessing a well-defined, conceptually unequivocal, logocentric discourse, so material experience may contradict and undermine the prevalent ideology of a historical situation" (xxvii). Schulte-Sasse locates within a theorizing of avant-garde cultural production the possibility of alternative historical practices where "it is still possible to speak of a sensuous-material experience if an organization of society is inscribed in individuals in a way that is independent of language" (xxxi). Insisting that avant-garde artists are not simply reacting to perceived notions of ennui or "other pseudoexistentialist passions of the soul," Schulte-Sasse argues that we must pay more attention not to the pathos but to "the praxis of the modern artist. We should come to see avant-garde artists were actively attacking the institution of art. Their effort was not to isolate themselves but to reintegrate themselves and their art into life" (xxxvi). In this sense, Wah's poetry is a deeply engaged critique of the institution of Canadian poetry expressed through an insistence on a sensuous material experience which has been inscribed in a way that is outside of language even if it can only emerge to us obliquely through the praxis of an avant-garde poetics.

This exceeding of language within language returns us to Agamben and to his more recent philosophizing of the politics of the gesture in Means Without Ends. Arguing that language is itself a continual process of mediality, Agamben suggests that we find in the gesture that continuality which exceeds language.

> The gesture is… communication of a communicability. However, because being-in-language is not something that could be said in sentences, the gesture is essentially always a gesture of not being able to figure something out in language; it is always a *gag* in the proper meaning of the term, indicating first of all something that could be put in your mouth to hinder speech, as well as the sense of the actor's improvisation meant to compensate for loss of memory or an inability to speak. (Means 58)

The gag, the gesture, recalls Wah's own descriptions of his poems as "poses or postures" (Diamond Acknowledgements). Situated within the politics of the gesture, we can read these poses and postures as "not the sphere of an end in itself but rather the sphere of a pure and endless mediality" (Agamben Means 58). Agamben's notion of an endless mediality in gesture vividly recalls his conclusion in The End of the Poem. For Agamben, poetry is defined by enjambment. "Awareness of the importance of the opposition between metrical segmentation and semantic segmentation has led some scholars to the thesis (which [Agamben] share[s]) according to which the possibility of enjambment constitutes the only critierion for distinguishing poetry from prose" (End

109). This definition poses a problem for thinking about the end of the poem[29] where, seemingly, enjambment is not possible. However, it is in silence that Agamben locates the endless mediality of the end of the poem. The end of the poem's embrace of silence "would mean that the poem falls by once again marking the opposition between the semiotic and the semantic, just as sound seems forever consigned to sense and sense returned forever to sound. The double intensity animating language does not die away in a final comprehension; instead it collapses into silence, so to speak, in an endless falling" (Agamben End 115). The poem then is a means without end.

Wah's poetry philosophizes the limitations of language to capture the potentiality of memory at the same time that it gestures towards precisely those possibilities. His writing is a means without end. It is in the coming community, this potentiality, that I situate diaspora's potential as a site of radical intervention. Not because diasporas are stateless or deterritorialized, but because they are bound by the inimitable intimacy of true memory, a shared *mémoire involuntaire* which comes into presence in gustatory desire. The dehistoricized history of memory continues to pose a threat to historicism because it inexorably drags the past into the present and the future.

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[29] While I recognize the the prose-poem in general poses a particular problem for this discussion in that its dependance upon enjambment is less obvious, I argue that Wah's prose-poems are deeply aware of the line and that the line breaks in Diamond Grill are not the accident of a prosody. I do not have the space here to discuss the specific rhythms, meters and syllabic turns which are present in the prose-poems and the question of whether a prose-poem can be read within the critical vocabulary of conventional poetic criticism is not a major concern of this chapter. However, let me give a simple example of why the line breaks in Wah's prose-poems are consciously fashioned and not merely dictated by the accident of the publisher's margin size: the lengths of the prose-poem titles. The titles for each of the prose-poems flows directly into the text of the poem and are basically part of the prose-poem. Each of the prose-poem titles are of varying lengths and do not end at obvious syntactic "resting" points. For example, the first prose-poem title, "In the Diamond, at the end of a" ends with the indefinite article hanging unceremoniously until it connects with the "body" of the poem: "In the Diamond, at the end of a/ long green vinyl aisle between booths of chrome, Naugahyde, and/ Formic, are two large swinging wooden doors, each with a round// hatch of face-sized window"

Emerging out of and coalescing within true memory, recuperated from history, diasporic communities challenge state power. Throughout the literature on diaspora, we have speculated on the ways in which diasporas are resistant social forms. There have been suggestions that they are radical because they challenge the nation-state. In Chapter Two I suggested that the diasporic challenge did not lie in a spatial resistance but in a temporal one. I called for an attention to the relationship between slowness and memory and in this chapter, I have shown that diasporic communities can be understood as constituted by the imminence of memory rather than by the backward browsings of historicism. We risk reinscribing the suppression of alternative histories in relegating nostalgia solely to the realm of the inconsequentially sentimental. Underneath the pathologizing of nostalgia lies the anxieties of colonialism's own unresolved sickness for a home that never existed. The nostalgia of diasporic subjects is not necessarily one that yearns for an impossible authenticity in fictive narratives of homeland. One part of theorizing and thinking through the possibilities of diasporic resistance lies in recuperating the pasts that might otherwise remain buried in the rubbish of sentiment. In recuperating nostalgia from sentiment and memory from history I hope to have moved towards an awareness of an unofficial history embedded in the gestures and longings of the racialized body. The radical potential of diasporic memory which insists on a potentiality, a coming into presence, a history of what shall be thought, is that it is almost guerilla-like in its emergence. It is not quite nameable, not quite locatable, not quite

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(Diamond 1). The varying lengths of the titles are not, I suggest, arbitrarily placed, but identifiable. And yet, its existence is undeniable as "taste burnt right through the spine" (Wah Diamond 74). It is as undeniable as the water on my tongue at the memory of a time when I will sip wet, burned rice. The ties that bind lie in the futures of desire and not in the rightness of a past that will always be mythological. Diasporic communities emerge as communities despite the dislocations of dispersion through the history of the possible, the memory of the future. The being-in-common of diaspora comes into presence in how taste remembers life.

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determine the locations of line breaks and the closing line of the prose-poems.

Conclusion

> HIS HALF-DREAM IN THE STILL-
>
> DARK BREATHING SILENCE IS
>
> the translation from the bitter-green cloudiness of the winter melon soup in his dream to the sweet-brown lotus root soup he knows Shu will prepare later this morning for the Chinese staff in the café. He moves the taste of the delicate nut-like lotus seeds through minor degrees of pungency and smokiness to the crunchy slices of lotus root suspended in the salty-sweet beef broth. This silent rehearsal of the memory of taste moves into his mind so that the first language behind his closed eyes is a dreamy play-by-play about making beef and lotus root soup. Simple: a pound of short ribs and a pound of lotus root in a small pot of water with some soy sauce and salt, a little sliced ginger, maybe a few red Chinese dates. Shu will surely touch it with a piece of dried orange peel because it's close to Christmas. He feels his tongue start to move as his mouth waters at the palpable flavour of words. (Wah Diamond 174)

Before the modern restaurant became a restaurant, it was an object rather than a place. It was a bowl of soup, a restorative broth, *un restaurant*. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France, it was a highly condensed bouillon served in small cups to those who deemed themselves too delicate to digest meats and vegetables, preferring instead these "essences" of chicken, beef and so on. While the story of the European restaurant's transformation from "miniature soup-cup to Rabelasian excess, from sensibility to politics" is a story told elsewhere (Sprang 3),[1] in a dissertation about small town Chinese restaurants, it seems fitting then that we circle back to soup, the first course. We will close where the restaurant begins.

I used to find Chinese soups suspicious. They were too much like Chinese medicine. Too many ingredients I couldn't name. And nobody ate any of these things on TV. Give me something from that ubiquitous red and white can, warmed up in the old steel pot, any day. At the Diamond Grill, you could order: Chicken Rice, Chicken Noodle, Cream Mushroom, Consomme Clear, Vegetable, Cream Tomato, Clam Chowder, Cream Celery, Dinner Soup. No lotus root in beef broth. No winter melon. Shu makes the lotus root soup for the Chinese staff at the café. Why isn't it on the menu? Are there communities of taste? Wah's poem seems to suggest that there might be something we might call a "Chinese taste." The woeful inadequacy of this phrase already points to part of the problem of how we can talk about something that might just be outside the bounds of the articulable. When your tongue waters at the palpable flavour of words, at the memory of pungent and smoky lotus seeds and the sweet-saltiness of beef broth, does it water in the same way as mine? Against the Kantian notion of taste as deeply subjective, as individually idiosyncratic,[2] I have been gambling on the possibility of community constituted in that which has precisely been rejected as too subjective, too individual and too nostalgic for the formation of community. While I am committed to the question of what it is that makes the diasporic subject diasporic, my exploration of an answer has been speculative, a wager on the possibility that we might have tastes that might not be entirely our own.

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[1] Please see the Introduction of Sprang, "To Make a Restaurant."

[2] For example, in the Critique of Judgement, Kant argues that, regarding "the *agreeable* every one concedes that his judgement, which he bases on private feeling, and in which

In the last chapter, I have been trying to think through the "demand of diaspora criticism" as a problem of memory (Scott 127). Terdiman suggests that memory has a materiality. But does this materiality have a collectivity? Can we think of memory as not only transgenerational, but also as something which traverses individual subjectivities. It seems to me that it does even though we may not be able to articulate how exactly this might work. In their "Dialogue on Racial Melancholia," David Eng and Shinhee Han write about Rea Tajiri's video History and Memory. The video is about a Japanese American girl whose parents survive the internment. Her mother has suppressed all memories of the internment. The daughter has nightmares she cannot explain of a young woman at a watering well and enters a state of depression. "Eventually, the daughter discovers that these nightmares are reenactments of the mother's histories in the camp. Ironically, the mother has history but no memory, while the daughter has memory but no history" (Eng and Han 354). Tajiri's work posits a "theory of melancholia that is not individually experience but intergenerationally shared" (Eng and Han 354). Both Anne Cheng's work and that of Eng and Han suggests the possibility of intersubjective

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he declares that an object pleases him, is restricted merely to himself personally. Thus he does not take it amiss if, when he says that Canary-wine is agreeable, another corrects the expression and reminds him that he ought to say: It is agreeable *to me*. This applies not only to the taste of the tongue, the palate, and the throat, but to what may with any one be melancholia where the "historical traumas of loss are passed down from one generation to another unconsciously" (Eng and Han 354).

While Tajiri's work is a specific, and very compelling, example of the possibility of the psychic manifestations of the residual of loss, of that which remains and gets passed on across generations and individuals, this dissertation has not been about a singular historical trauma or event. Part of the challenge of writing about the Chinese diaspora without giving in to historical triumphalism lies in resisting the urge to spectacularize the large, nameable events of historical trauma. That is not to say that sweeping, horrifying events which have displaced so many people – the indenturing of Chinese labourers, the Nanking Massacre, the Boxer Rebellion, the rise of the gulag labour system, just to name a few – are not significant. But this by no means inclusive list of some of the traumas that might be associated with Chinese diaspora history in itself suggests and masks the multiplicity of losses and displacements. Further, we cannot overlook the smaller, pedestrian events which accrue day after day. In the last chapter, I resisted naming indenture as being akin to slavery in David Scott's reformulation of Kamau Braithwaite's "profoundly oppositional Afro-Caribbean tradition" where "slavery is the name of a trial and tribulation and Africa the name of an identity/difference" (127). Where slavery names a trial and tribulation shared by most of the black diaspora, indenture does not name a singular, shared event in Asian-Pacific migration. That does not dispel its importance as one of the primary sources of nineteenth- and twentieth-century mass trans-Pacific migration, but suggests the need to resist the urge to name singular traumas for the Chinese diaspora.

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agreeable to the eye or the ear… With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good:

While I have insisted from the beginning of this dissertation that diaspora must retain a sense of its relationship to the historical oppressions and dislocations of colonialism and imperialism in its many forms, I have also resisted naming indenture as the only defining experience of the Chinese diaspora. To be sure, against the trend of current Chinese diaspora studies, I have insisted on the contemporaneity of indenture, on the need to consider it as a feature of the present rather than relegating it to a forgettable past in the desire to move on, to progress into a future of global cosmopolitanism. This insistence connects to my sense that diaspora studies needs to retain its relationship with postcolonial studies. However, I do not want to name an originary role for indenture in the Chinese diaspora. Rather, my hope is that we embrace the multiple forms of sadnessess and loss which emerge from displacement, one form of which is the legacy of indenture. It is not that the restaurant is directly related to indenture, that those who worked on the railway then went on to work in restaurants (although this did happen), but that the small-town Chinese restaurant illuminates the gap between indenture as an event firmly embedded in the past, and the way in which the residuum of indenture continues to emerge in the present. This dissertation is about the small acts of resistance and recalcitrance, the overlooked forms of agency embedded within everyday exchanges and interactions.

Within this commitment to the everyday, we can locate the collective forms of loss and trauma which form the sometimes irrational ties that bind – irrational because they cannot always be explained within the forms of knowledge which we have at hand. How do you explain a daughter who dreams a mother's history? How do you rationalize

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Everyone has his own taste (that of sense)" (51-2).

the longing for the taste of *juk* which is "even better than bird's-nest soup, though both soups share an intrinsic proprioceptive synapse: memory" (Wah Diamond 167). Memory is not always rational. As Dipesh Chakrabarty notes about the difference between memory and history with regard to Partition in India, "[h]istory seeks to explain the event; the memory of pain refuses the historical explanation and sees the event as a monstrously irrational aberration" (Habitations 119). This dissertation is committed to memory's refusal of history, to the possibilities of that which is not always rational but which is nonetheless a part of our world.

When you eat lotus root, it tears into multiple threads as it separates on the edge of your teeth. They become cobwebs in your mouth. Perhaps we can read in that gap, the moment before swallowing, not a silence but a "caesura," (Bhabha 246), a different story. In the half-dream that translates bitter-melon into the silken webs of lotus root, we can read for the history's otherness, for memory which traverses collectivities and constitutes communities.

This dissertation began with the problem of a requiem for that which has not died, for those who have not disappeared. It emerges out of a concern for the way in which discussions of transnationalism, the global movement of migrants and the rise of the visibly diasporic in the first world collapse the nonmodern with the backward. I have argued that shifting our attention to the non-metropolitan spaces of diasporic arrival, to spaces such as the small town Chinese restaurant, enables an alternative understanding of diasporic agency and community. I have shown in Chapter Two that particularizing diasporic arrival allows for an understanding of diasporic agency which is not purely spatial but also temporal. That is, diasporas are a problem for first world declarations of autochthonous whiteness not only because they are just there, but because they break up the flow of progressive history, because they put into place a different temporality. As Meaghan Morris notes,

> One broad consequence of what David Harvey has called time-space compression is not… the much-vaunted 'fragmenting' of a (European) sense of history that Harvey perceives in postmodernism, but rather a proliferation of heterogeneous and *volatized* temporalities rendering global a struggle over history that is more intense than ever before. (226)

That historicist temporality which is solid melts into air when we recognize the heterogeneity of diasporic temporalities. Rather than rushing forward into newer, shinier futures of progress and supposed promise, we can look for the secret connection between memory and slowness.

Shifting our perception of diasporic arrival to include the non-metropolitan yields not only an understanding of diasporic agency emerging from temporal disjunctiveness, but also, as I argue in Chapter Four, a sense of the way in which Chineseness and Canadianness are produced through interaction. As Gupta and Ferguson argue, cultural difference is not pre-given but produced through the interactions of difference. The small town Chinese restaurant complicates the notion of Chineseness not because it serves versions of "fake" Chinese food, but because it puts into question the notion of Chineseness in the first place. Further, as I show in Chapter Three, examining the circulation of Chineseness through the small town Chinese restaurant in texts such as the music of Joni Mitchell and Sylvia Tyson reveals the nostalgia which is structural to the ideal public sphere and the use of Chineseness as a screen in both senses. It screens out the predications of the public sphere on indenture and slavery; and it functions as a space of projection for the consolidation of white liberal subjects.

Overall, this dissertation has tried to recuperate the reputedly nonmodern from the dustbins of backwardness and to see in that which has been declared backward the possibilities of alternative histories, and submerged or suppressed agency. Against a history that seems to suggest a population that was largely passive, that took their beatings without major protest, that was outraged and yet acquiescent, this project has tried to look for something else. In Chinese Canadian history, there are no major rebellions or revolutions on the order of the rebellion of the Santals in 1855 India, or that of the Haitian revolution, or the Philippino sugar strikes in early-twentieth-century Hawaii, and yet this does not mean that there was no protest. Chapter One argued for a conception of agency in diaspora which shares much with the work of Subaltern Studies, but also differs from it. In diaspora, you are not the (colonized) majority. In diaspora, you are not "native." But you work; you cook; you serve food; you change the names of dishes, tell jokes, and share memories; you eat food that you crave and you long for things you cannot always name. As this dissertation has shown, agency, resistance and recalcitrance can take less noisy, less visible forms in diaspora. We have to read differently.

Reading differently, I want to conclude by casting a backward glance at the dissertation through the lens of one last photograph.

It was taken in 1905 at the MacInnes lumber camp in Elkmouth, British Columbia. A loose assembly of burly lumber workers stands rough and tall, shoulder to flannel shoulder, in the center. Some smile. Most don't. It is hard work. They are in the middle of nowhere, logging, living months on end at a camp that is known only by the name of their employer. Hugh MacInnes, the owner of the camp, stands in the front, arms folded across his chest. The only one wearing a sports jacket, he stares sternly into the camera. At the end of the front row on the right-hand side, there is a Chinese man, the only one in the group. He is a little shorter than everyone else. He wears a cap, shapeless, dark, button-front coat over many other layers, and tough workpants like everyone else. Thumbs in his pockets, arms out, he stands broadly, looking straight into the camera.

The photograph is archived at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta. On the back of the photograph there is a note: "Chinese man, front right, was a woman in disguise." The note comes from Richard MacInnes, grandson of the Hugh, who donated the materials to the Glenbow a few years ago. The story that has been passed around in the MacInnes family is that she was the best camp cook Hugh MacInnes ever had. After that it gets fuzzy. How did he know? Did everyone else in the camp know? As a cook, she kept different hours than everyone else at the camp. She slept behind the cooking shed, at a distance from the rest of the camp. Maybe they didn't know. Maybe they did. Why was she disguised? Nobody seems to remember her name. She worked, disguised as a man, for the MacInnes' for a few years and then left. Where and why, again, nobody seems to know. The records are full of gaps. Tucked away amidst archival files on lumber camps and logging, she interrupts our presumptions of bachelor societies, of how women came and what they did. She suggests another, hidden history of Chinese women in Canada that we have yet to grasp.

Throughout the time that I have worked on this dissertation, I have often been asked about the place of women in this project. I have taken this question to be about two broadly related concerns. I understand the first to be a more straightforward concern with presence: Where are the women? The second I take to be about the problem of methodology and praxis: What is the place of feminist critique for a project that seems to be almost entirely about men? From Ah Lum in Hong Kong to Hoy Fat Leong and Charlie Chew Long in New Dayton, to Fred Wah mourning the death of a father, Chinese women seem to be far from the center of this project. As Meaghan Morris, Rosemary Hennessy, Doreen Massey and many others, make clear, feminist work is not only about engaging with women as objects of inquiry, but also about the way in which the research is carried out. I hope that the commitment to exploring an alternative, interruptive temporality, to the multiple planes of history as Koeselleck puts it, has demonstrated one way of doing feminist work even when there *seem* to be no women in the picture.

With the problem of presence and my response to this concern has been two-fold. One, according to all of the documents, the census data, the immigration records and the official histories, there were very few Chinese women in Canada prior to 1947. Feminist historians such as the Women's Book Committee of the Chinese Canadian National Council tried to address this problem of presence with the publication of Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women in 1992. The book records the histories of several Chinese Canadian women and fills an important gap in our historical record. However, addressing the problem of presence does not modify the dominance of the bachelor society in this history, nor does it dislodge what the immigration records and the Chinese Immigration Act flatly declare: that, before the end of Exclusion, Chinese women entered Canada through two, and only two, categorical ports of entry, wife or prostitute. My second response to the problem of presence lies in recognizing that there were women that we do not yet know about.

One cross-dressed Chinese woman does not necessarily mean that there are many more, nor does she invalidate the hardships and history of a bachelor society that survived against the edicts of immigration laws that intended otherwise. However, her particularity should not be ignored or treated as unique. She is neither the exception nor the rule, but a figure of possibility. There are other histories yet to be unfolded. As cultural critics, we do not explode the particular into the general, but examine the way in which it complicates the general narrative, the way in which it presents an interruption to what we think we know.

If the demand of diaspora criticism has been that of negotiating between cultural nationalism and deconstruction, perhaps the obligation of diaspora criticism is to the otherness of history, to memory and the spaces where modernity sometimes stammers. Memory has a collectivity, cutting across generations and individuals, but where is the place of the disguised lumber camp cook in our remembering? In this backward glance, this project looks forward as well towards the work that we have yet to do. While Gayatri Spivak has insisted that the experience of being in diaspora is a fundamentally uneven one for third world women,[3] we have yet to work out the contours of that unevenness.

The photograph of the lumber camp illuminates the overdetermined sense of gender which attends to considerations of early Chinese migrant labour and the Chinese diaspora. It raises questions about the seemingly unknown and barely visible history of women labourers, cross dressing and gender performance. The photograph points directly to an over-written history of male migration and the tendency towards discursive generalization of Chinese migrants – the way the definite article hovers over the entire history of Chineseness in Canada implying a specificity and knowability to a constantly shifting subjectivity. The Chinese Restaurant. The Chinese Labourer. The "Coolie." Against the attempts to pin down Chineseness through a project of persistent universalization, this project has been committed to the specificities of diasporic arrival. As the lens of our backward glance makes clear, this is an unfinished commitment.

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[3] Please see "Diasporas Old and New"

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